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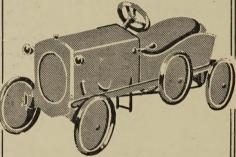
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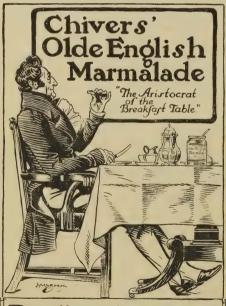
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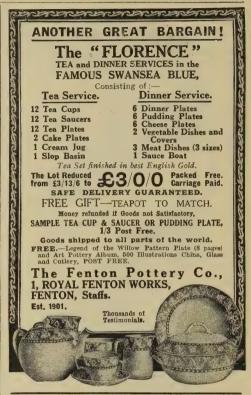




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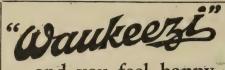
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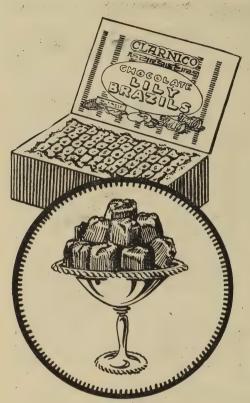
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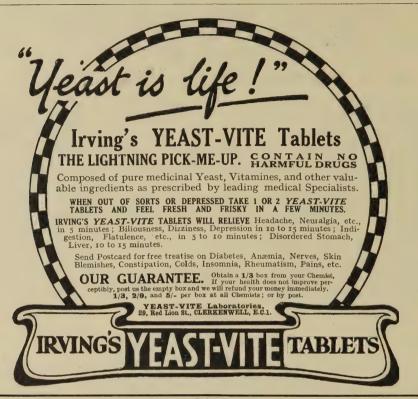


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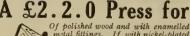
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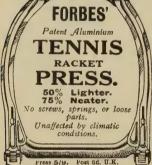
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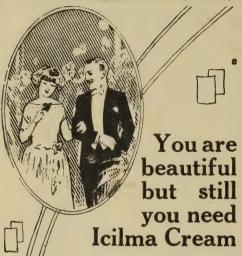
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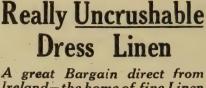
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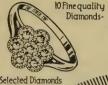
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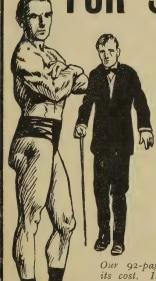
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STRAND MAGAZINE, May, 1924.

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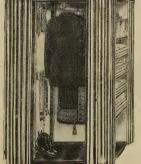
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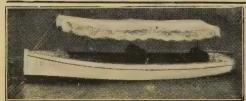
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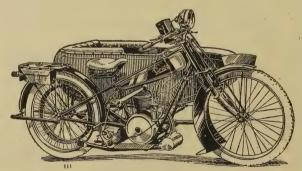
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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for May, 1924.

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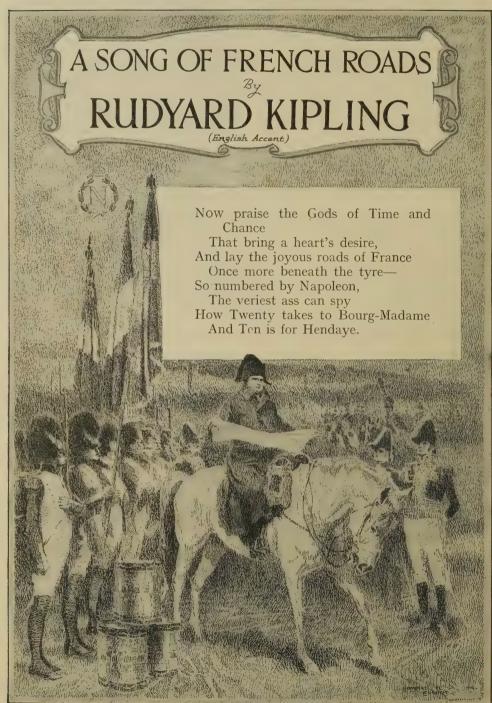




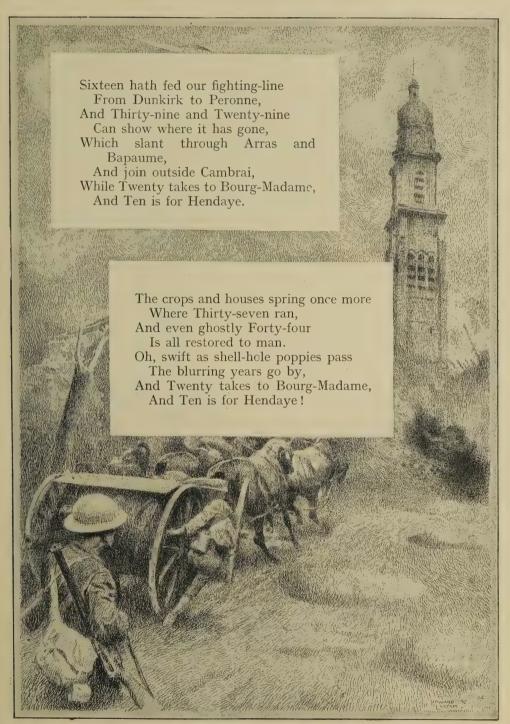




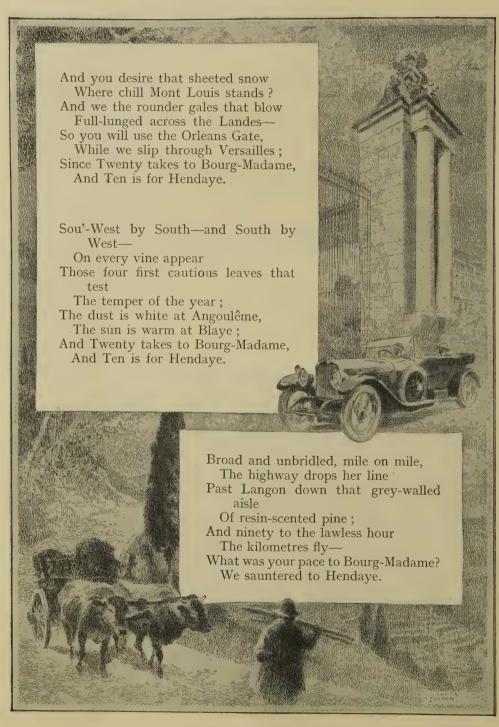
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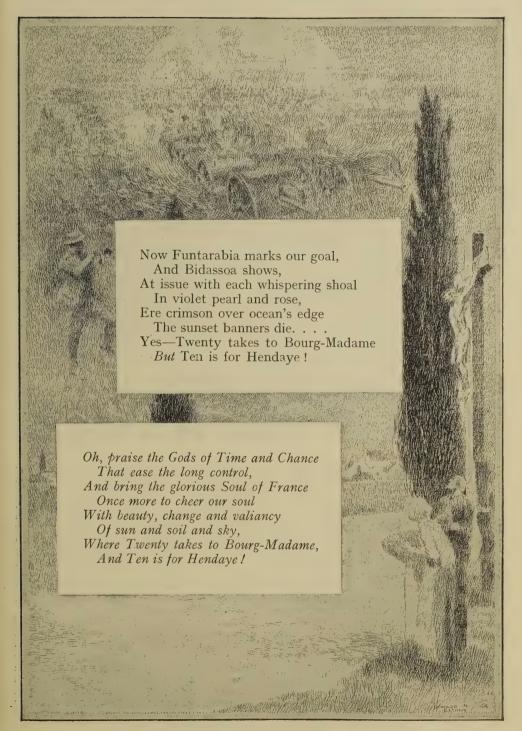


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STACY AUMONIER

THE refinement of ILLUSTRATED BY the Bindloss REGINALD CLEAVER family was a by-word in Tibbelsford. daughter, Gw

Mr. Bindloss himself was a retired printer. Now, as everyone knows, printing is a most respectable profession, but retirement is the most refined profession of all. It suggests vested interests, getting up late in the morning, having a nap in the afternoon, and voting for keeping things stable. But Mr. Bindloss was by no means an inactive man. He was a sidesman at St. Mark's Church, tended his own garden, grew tomatoes, supervised the education of his two daughters, sat on the committee of the Tibbelsford Temperance League and the Domestic Pets' Defence League. Mrs. Bindloss was even more refined, for it was rumoured that she was distantly related to a lord. She certainly spoke in that thin, precise manner which was easily associable with the aristocracy; a manner which her daughters imitated to perfection. The elder

daughter, Gwendoline, who was sixteen, was in her last term at Miss Langton Matravers' school; whilst the younger daughter, Mildred, was in her first term at that same institution. One might mention in passing that Miss Langton Matravers prided herself that she only catered for daughters of the gentry. The family lived in a neat, semi-detached villa in the Quorn Road.

Now it came to pass in the fullness of time that Mr. Bindloss realized that he was not so well off as he thought he was, or as he used to be. He discovered that the money that he had made by honest toil in the printing trade was now described as unearned increment, and taxed accordingly. Moreover, it did not go so far as it did in the good old days of his early retirement.

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One spring morning Mr. Bindloss was in the garden thinning out some young cabbage plants, when his wife came out to him holding a letter in her hand.

"I've had a letter from Agnes," she said.

"Oh!" said Mr. Bindloss."

"She says that the Northallertons have gone to live at Tollinghurst."

'Really!" said Mr. Bindloss.

"Yes. Do you know that young Archie Northallerton may one day be Lord Windlass?"

"Oh, that's nice!" said Mr. Bindloss, who was apt to be a little preoccupied when gardening.

"Put that trowel down, Julian, and listen to me," said his wife.

Mr. Bindloss knew when he was spoken

to, and he obeyed.
"Young Archie is just fourteen, Tollinghurst is only half an hour's journey by train. Does anything strike you?"

"Not forcibly," replied Mr. Bindloss, scratching his head behind the left ear.

"No, I suppose it wouldn't," snapped the refined Mrs. Bindloss. "Does it not occur to you that this boy is fourteen—that is to say, that he is two years older than Mildred and two years younger than Gwen?"

The eyes of Mr. Bindloss narrowed. His wife's implication became clear to him. "What a thing it is to have a clever wife," he said, defensively; then added: "It's a bit young to think of—er—marriage."
"It's not too young to begin to think

about it."
"No, no, that's true, that's very true. What do you propose to do, my dear?"

Write to his mother, and suggest their bringing or sending the boy over for the

day."
"Excellent. You know her, of course?" "I haven't actually met her, but she will

We are distantly know of me, naturally.

"You say the boy may be Lord Cutlass?"
"Windlass, not Cutlass. It's like this—
my sister married a Bream, who are cousins to the Northallertons. Henry Bolsover Northallerton, the father of this boy, is the younger brother of Lord Windlass, who is a middle-aged bachelor. If he leaves no heirs, Archie will inherit the estates and the title."

"I see, yours is not exactly a blood relationship, then. I mean to say, there

would be no obstacles-

"No obstacles at all. The Northallertons in any case are a very good family and very

wealthy."

"Well, of course, my dear, I sha'n't stand in your way. Indeed, I'll do my best to make the young gentleman's visit enjoyable." So Mr. Bindloss returned to his cabbages and Mrs. Bindloss to the library, where she wrote the following letter:-

" Dear Mrs. Northallerton,-

"Forgive my writing you, as I don't think we have ever actually met. My dear sister's husband, Samuel Bream, used to speak so affectionately about you all. Happening to hear that you have come to live in the neighbourhood, I wonder whether you would give us the great pleasure of a visit. My dear husband, who has retired from business, and my two daughters and myself would be delighted to welcome you. We live in a modest way, but we have a very pleasant garden, as this is my husband's special hobby. I hear you have a small boy. We should be so pleased if you would bring him too, as we are all devoted to boys.

"Believe me, dear Mrs. Northallerton,
"Yrs cordially,

"CORA BINDLOSS."

This letter elicited no reply for five days. At length one morning came the following:—

" Dear Mrs. Bindloss,-

· "Thank you for your letter. Yes, I remember hearing my cousin speak of you. I'm afraid I cannot come over to see you just now, as I have several house-parties coming on, and Archie is attending school. Perhaps some time when you are in the neighbourhood you will give me a call:

Yrs sincerely,

"CONSTANCE NORTHALLERTON."

To some people this reply would have been accepted as rather in the nature of a snub, but not so to Mrs. Bindloss.

She waited fourteen days. It is possible that she might have called on Mrs. Northallerton sooner, but this interlude had been devoted to the making of an ill-afforded new frock. At the end of that period she took the train to Tollinghurst, and walked sedately up to "The Three Gables," only alas! to find that Mrs. Northallerton had gone up to town for a few days. Whatever faults Mrs. Bindloss may have had, a lack of tenacity of purpose was not one. times during the course of a fortnight she "happened to be in the neighbourhood" of Tollinghurst.

On the third occasion she ran her quarry earth. Mrs. Northallerton was just going out, but she was graciously pleased to entertain Mrs. Bindloss for a quarter of an hour. The latter was at her very best. She flattered her hostess about her house, her clothes, her appearance, and her intelligence in accents so refined as to be almost painful. No one is entirely immune to flattery, and Mrs. Northallerton could not help but be polite, and a little cordial. Towards the end of the interview Mrs. Bindloss said:—

"And how is that dear boy of yours?

Archie, isn't his name?"

"Oh, he's very well. He's at school.

He goes to Headingly, you know."

"Really, how interesting!" exclaimed
Mrs. Bindloss. "I hear it's such an excellent school. It is the great grief of my husband and myself that we never had a boy. My husband adores boys. It would be so delightful if you would let—er— Archie come over and see us one day—perhaps during the holidays."

"Why, of course, I expect he would like to come very much," replied Mrs. Northallerton, without any great show of en-thusiasm. "He's just got his school cap maroon and black stripes. He's very pleased with himself."

"How delightful! I do think maroon and black is a delightful combination. I expect he's a very clever boy, isn't he?"
"They seem to think so, Mrs. Bindloss.

He's very good at Latin and botany."

" Really, how splendid, Mrs. Northallerton. He would get on admirably with my husband. He doesn't know much Latin. He can't speak it, you know; but he knows all about botany. You should see the tomatoes he grows."

"Indeed! Well, it's very good of you to call, but I'm afraid I really must be

going now."

"Of course. Oh, dear! I'm afraid I'm an awful chatterbox, especially when I

meet someone really interesting.

When Mrs. Bindloss returned home that evening she was able to announce that the boy was certainly coming over to visit the family during the holidays. She also said that her husband and both the girls were to study hard at Latin and botany. Now, this command led to a good deal of unpleasantness. The little Latin that Mr. Bindloss had learnt at school he had almost entirely forgotten. It seemed rather much to expect, at his time of life, that at the end of a day's gardening, when his natural inclinations were to sit down and read the newspaper, he should have to try and learn up passages from Virgil. The girls said they hated botany and had no books on it. This defect was rapidly put right by Mrs. Bindloss, who went into the town and bought Green's "Life of the Plant" and Morgan's "Botany for Beginners."

"You will study these books, Gwendoline

"You will study these books, Gwendoline and Mildred, or there will be no Flower Show and Church Bazaar for you next month."

Under this dire menace the two girls steeled themselves to grasp the first principles of plant life. And during the ensuing summer months Mrs. Bindloss did her best to train their minds in some of the principles of human life. She did it quietly and insinuatingly. She pointed out how in a few years' time they would come to the stage when they would require to marry. She limned all the beauties and advantages of married life. She dwelt upon her own happy married life, only handicapped by the eternal lack of funds. Everything was so expensive now. Unless one was very, very rich, one had to do one's own housework. The two girls, she knew, hated housework. Then she began gradually to talk about young Archie Northallerton. She had heard that he was a perfectly charming boy, very kind, clever, and gentlemanly. He would one day probably be Lord Windlass; in any case he would be very rich. A woman married to him would be a real Lady, and would never have to do any housework at all. She did not think it advisable to go any further. The affair did not make much impression on Mildred. She was of the age which is more interested in meringues than marriage. But Gwendoline was sixteen, and was beginning to be absorbed in erotic literature. In reading of the doings of Ivanhoe and Lancelot it occurred to her sometimes that Tibbelsford was a drab little town. And she dreamed of a knight on a white charger riding up to Number 27, Quorn Road, and snatching her up—one evening perhaps when she was watering the syringa in the front garden and carrying her off and whispering in her

"Come, my beloved, I will make you a Lady."

As the summer advanced the family began to discuss the best way to entertain the future lord. It was to be assumed that it would be a fine day. Now, Mr. Bindloss took a great pride in his lawn, which he

kept rolled and cut himself. He had never allowed tennis or any other game to be played on it, but, discussing the matter in bed one night with his wife, they agreed that a game of some sort would have obvious advantages. It would bring the young people into more intimate relationship. But tennis? None of the family played tennis, and it was doubtful if the lawn was quite large enough. But what about croquet. Croquet was a nice quiet game that didn't require running about, and would not be likely to damage the flower-beds. Yes, croquet they decided was just the thing.

The next day Mr. Bindloss wrote up to town and had a croquet set sent down. When it arrived he and his wife pored over the rules. They seemed extremely complicated, and the girls were called in to give their help. The only solution seemed to be to

set up the hoops and experiment.

"We must be able to play a decent game when Archie comes," said Gwendoline, who quickly showed herself the most proficient of the family. Nearly every afternoon for some weeks the Bindloss family practised croquet, much to the astonishment of their neighbours. Mr. Bindloss had to explain to Mr. Longman next door that the exercise was good for the girls. This was a good enough reason, but whatever physical benefits may have accrued, it cannot be said that the mental effect was satisfactory. There is, perhaps, no game at which people can so easily and persistently lose their tempers as croquet. There were furious arguments and disputes about the rules. Moreover, Mr. Bindloss objected to being beaten, and the girls accused him of cheating. Mrs. Bindloss always played with the wrong ball, and swore it was the right one. Eventually the parents gave it up, and left the girls to play alone. Mildred hated the game, and was forced to play as though it were taking medicine.

They also bought a box of draughts and a box of Halma, in case it should be a wet day when Archie came. Early in July Mrs. Bindloss again wrote to Mrs. Northallerton, a chatty, friendly little letter, ending up by hoping that at the end of the term Mrs. Northallerton would remember her promise to bring Archie over for the day.

She received no reply to this and it was near the end of July. The situation was desperate. She knew the school must have broken up. Some women would have given up in despair, but not so Mrs. Bindloss. She wrote once more and said that as the weather was so fine and Mr. Bindloss's roses were now at their best, wouldn't Mrs. Northallerton and Archie come over

the following Wednesday to lunch and spend the afternoon? Her persistence reaped its rewar. Two days later came a telegram from somewhere in Yorkshire: "Many thanks; am arranging to send Archie next Wednesday. Train arrives 12.45. Northallerton."

Triumph! Mrs. Bindloss glowed with it. And then what to-do there was! The girls' new taffeta frocks had been in preparation some time and were quickly finished off. Mr. Bindloss was bought a new alpaca coat and Panama hat. A new loose cover was made for the best arm-chair in the drawing-room. And a man was sent for to mend all kinds of household defects, attention to which was considerably overdue.

"And now we must consider the lunch

and the tea," said Mrs. Bindloss.

It was decided that you could not give a potential lord anything less than chicken. The question was, ought they to have soup and fish as well? After a deal of argument they decided to have soup only, for the reason that they were short of plates, and if Annie, the daily help, had to wash up plates between courses she would probably lose her head. Of course there must be some nice sweets and pastry, but these could be prepared beforehand. And for tea there must be a goodly assortment of cakes, jam, and cream.

"A young gentleman like that is sure to appreciate such things," said Mrs. Bindloss, "and if we do it well he will be more likely

to come again."

AT length the great day dawned. Mrs. Bindloss was up early. She peered out of her bedroom window anxiously. Yes, the day promised to be fine. She got up and dressed and roused the rest of the family. There would be plenty to do for everyone. Annie couldn't be relied on to cook such an elaborate meal by herself. Mrs. Bindloss had had to scold her only the day before for carelessness. Mrs. Bindloss dressed feverishly. Annie, of course, was late. She would be on such an important occasion. Came half-past seven and then eight, and still no Annie. The girls were bustled out of bed and made to get the breakfast. The family started the day with bad tempers.

"It's no good getting agitated," said Mr. Bindloss, coming into the dining-room just

as the breakfast was on the table.

"It's all very well for some people," snapped Mrs. Bindloss. "Some people don't

have all the work and worry of it."

After a sketchy breakfast, Mildred was sent into the town on her bicycle to beat up the lagging Annie. She returned in half an hour's time with a message from Miss Annie

Woppins to the effect that that lady had no longer any intention of "obliging Mrs. B. after the saucy way she spoke to her yesterday."

Consternation and fury in the Bindloss

family.

"We must make the best of it," said Mr. Bindloss, looking up from his newspaper and lighting his pipe. "We must meet the

situation with Christian fortitude."

"Yes, and perhaps you'll go and get some coals in," said Mrs. Bindloss. "Mildred, get on your bicycle again and go and see if you can get Mrs. Betts or that other woman in Stone's Passage—what's her name?—the one with a moustache."

"We can't have that awful apparition about for Archie to see," exclaimed Gwen.

"You'd better get on with the house-work," said Mrs. Bindloss. "And be quick about it! And, Mildred, on the way back, call at Fleming's and order the dogcart to be here sharp at twelve, to take some of us to the station. Julian, after you've got the coals in, you can clean the knives, and then roll the lawn, and put up the croquet hoops."

Mrs. Bindloss's annoyance about the defection of Annie was mellowed by a certain cynical enjoyment at rubbing it in about the sordidness of domestic drudgery. It would be an object-lesson to the girls. Having borne the burden of the fight so far, she meant to stand no nonsense from the family. For the next few hours the house was in a turmoil. Mildred returned to say that neither Mrs. Betts nor the woman with a moustache was available. Mrs. Bindloss proceeded with her preparations for lunch, whilst her husband and daughters were sent flying round at her commands. It was decided that the correct thing would be for Mr. and Mrs. Bindloss to go to the station themselves in the dogcart to meet the future Lord Windlass, whilst the girls remained behind to change into their new taffeta frocks, and at the same time to keep an eye on the lunch. It must be acknowledged that under the very trying circumstances Mrs. Bindloss managed efficiently. All the preparations were carefully made, and when the dogcart arrived at twelve o'clock she was ready in the hall pulling on her new white kid gloves.

They arrived at the station a good quarter of an hour before the train came in. Mrs. Bindloss was one of those women who are always pecking at their husbands. That is to say, she was always darting at him and pulling his waistcoat down, putting his tie straight, or picking little bits of cotton off his coat. This quarter of an hour was fully occupied in this way, amplified by various wishing-to-goodnesses he would



There is, perhaps, no game at which people can so easily and persistently lose their tempers as croquet.

do this, that, and the other in regard to bis clothes.

Slack hour, and a mere handful of people got out. In this company it was not difficult to discriminate which was the future

Lord Windlass. The rest were ordinary market folk. Apart from being obviously what is known as "upper class," he was wearing the maroon and black striped cap which his mother had spoken to Mrs. Bindloss about. He came swinging along the platform, and he was carrying-curiously enough—two fishing-rods in canvas cover-

ings and a brown-paper parcel.
"Leave this to me," whispered Mrs.
Bindloss. When the boy was within hailing distance she cried out in her most refined

accents :--

"So here you are, Archie! Welcome

to Tibbelsford!"

She held out her hand, and he took it shyly. On close examination it could not be said that this future Lord Windlass was exactly prepossessing in appearance. For a boy of fourteen he was distinctly too fat. His round, fat face was flabby, and indeed the lower part of his face even gave the appearance of having double chins. His expression was taciturn, with a shy reserve of maliciousness.

"You're just in time for lunch," added Mrs. Bindloss, who was avid to begin the lavish entertaining. "I expect you're ready for your lunch after your journey."

Archie mumbled something about being "able to peck a bit," and the three walked out of the station and got into the dogcart.

WHEN they were seated, Mrs. Bindloss broke out

"Now, my dear Archie, I have a most dreadful confession to make. I don't know what you'll think, considering what you-er-are used to. But the whole of our domestic service has broken down. I don't know whatever kind of lunch we shall be able to provide. I do hope you won't mind taking pot-luck. I do Our cook is ill in bed, and we're in such a muddle."

They couldn't hear what the boy replied, owing to the rattle of the wheels and the noise of the town. Mrs. Bindloss continued :-

"And how is your dear mother?"

"She's all right."

"Such a charming woman, so handsome, so intellectual!"

The rest of the conversation on the way to the house consisted of a wild babble of effusive comment from Mrs. Bindloss, a certain amount of forced hilarity from Mr. Bindloss, checked by almost inaudible monosyllables from the boy.

"He's very shy," Mrs. Bindloss whispered to her husband as they descended from the dogcart. Gwendoline was on the

lawn.

Mrs. Bindloss called out:—
"Ah, here we are, dear! This is my eldest girl, Gwendoline. I hope you'll be great friends. Where is Mildred? Reading, I expect. Both my girls are great readers. Are you fond of reading, Archie?"

He was understood to say either "yes"

or "no."

It was then Mr. Bindloss's turn to have something to say.

"Hullo, I see you've brought fishingrods. I'm afraid we haven't any fishing here. "Haven't you?" said Archie, quite

distinctly.

They entered the hall, and he put down his rods and his brown-paper parcel, and took a stone bottle of ginger-beer out of his pocket and laid it beside

"Oh, dear! boys will be pueri," said Mr. Bindloss, who was preparing for his Latin campaign. "He's brought a bottle of ginger-beer, and I do believe—this parcel

"Really, Julian, Archie's parcel is no business of yours."

"They're sandwiches," said the visitor. This rather surprising statement was robbed of further comment by Mildred's entrance, rubbing her hands on her apron, which she had forgotten to remove. She had been dishing up the vegetables.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Bindloss. "Here's our younger pride, Mildred, Mildred, dear, what are you wearing that apron for? Have you been working at your plants in

the conservatory?"

"No, mother, I-er-" She held out her hand to Archie and said timidly: "How are you?"

"Pretty dicky," replied the boy.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Bindloss. "Pretty dicky! But, my dear boy, why didn't you tell me? What can we do? Is there anything you'd like? A little sal volatile, perhaps. How do you fee!?"
"Oh, I don't know," he answered.

"But this is most distressing. Do you

feel like having any lunch?"

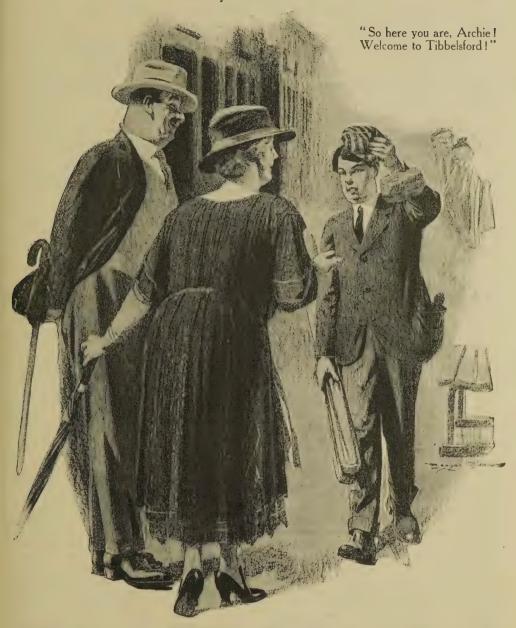
"I expect I could peck a bit."

There is no denying that the future Lord Windlass had not made a very auspicious start. He was plain, surly; he arrived with fishing-rods, sandwiches, and ginger-beerwhatever kind of people did his mother think they were ?--and on top of this he announced that he felt "dicky.

"Come on then, Julian, take Archie upstairs. Perhaps he would like a wash. He

may feel better after lunch.'

While he was upstairs, the lunch was whipped on to the table. It must be acknowledged that for an invalid Archie "pecked"



remarkably well. He had two wings of chicken, a large slice of breast, the parson's nose, two sausages, a liberal helping of sprouts and potatoes, some coffee jelly, three mince-pies, a banana, an apple, and some nuts and chocolates. Apart from eating, his enthusiasms appeared dormant. They could get him to talk about nothing at all. Mrs. Bindloss talked about the Royal family, the weather, politics, her two daughters' cleverness—she didn't mention that it

was Mildred who had smitched the brussels sprouts—the church, and the lower classes. Mr. Bindloss talked about Headingly College, the decay of society, and the beauties of plant life. Gwendoline recounted a beautiful romance she had just been reading called "The Mother Superior." Mildred stared at the future lord open-mouthed, too nervous and agitated to eat or speak. The young gentleman himself remained stubbornly monosyllabic. He only ventured

two remarks during the meal. Once he cocked his head on one side and said :-

"That picture's out of the straight. And towards the end of the meal he said to Mildred :-

"Do you hunt?"

On receiving an answer in the negative he relapsed into a settled gloom.

Once Mrs. Bindloss said :-

"After lunch, we thought you dear children might have a nice game of croquet. Do you play croquet, Archie?"
"No," he said. "I hate croquet."

This was distinctly discouraging in view of the time and expense that had been devoted in preparing this innocuous game. However, concessions have to be made to the eccentricities of a future lord. By an elaborate process Mr. Bindloss led up to the value of doing things promptly, and came out proudly with :-

"As you know, Archie, Corripe tempus quod adest, o juvenes, ne heri moriemini." Anyone who happened to know the trouble that Mr. Bindloss had had to memorize this old tag would sympathize with him in his disappointment when he regarded the face of his guest. It expressed an un-

comfortable disgust. Neither did he display

any excitement over the girls' careful draw-

ings of flowers and fauna.

FTER lunch, however, he appeared in a A better humour. On his own responsibility he suggested a game which he called "Yoics." It had to be played in a room, so they repaired to the drawing-room. The game was this. Each of the three players had to occupy a wall, touching it with their hands. Then the one facing the blank wall had to call out "Yoics! I'm going over." Then he or she had to throw themselves on the ground and scramble on all fours to the opposite wall before the other two-also on all fours-met in the middle and touched hands. If he or she failed to get there, then they all changed walls and someone else tried.

It was not a game that Mrs. Bindloss would have recommended, because for one thing it meant rearranging the furniture; furthermore, it did no good to the girls' new taffeta frocks. Nevertheless, she and her husband looked on and gave the impression of being greatly amused. Thev kept the game up for about twenty minutes, until, in an excess of anxiety to reach the opposite wall, Archie barged into the mahogany side-table and knocked it over, smashing the vase which dear Aunt Emily had given as a wedding present, and spilling the flowers and water all over Gwendoline's frock. Gwendoline had to go and change, and Mr. Bindloss suggested that as it was

such a fine day they might play some game in the garden.

Archie was now getting more at home with the girls, and his greater intimacy was principally demonstrated by pushing them about. He had quite a pleasant wrestle with Mildred while Gwen was changing her frock. He guaranteed to throw her three times in five minutes, pinioning her head to the ground, and he did so quite successfully. He was less successful with Gwen, as he only threw her twice in ten minutes, and then at the expense of tearing her skirt.

"It's a pity you don't play croquet, Archie," said Mrs. Bindloss. "It's a most

interesting game."

"No, I hate it. I'll tell you what we will do, though. Let's play croquet polo. You know, you have a goal at each end of the lawn, and you try and score

goals."

This sounded a harmless enough game, and they played Archie and Mildred versus Mr. Bindloss and Gwen. They started gently tapping the wooden ball across, but no goals being forthcoming, Archie began to hit harder, and suddenly there was a yell. Mr. Bindloss had received a fierce blow on the ankle from Archie's drive. He limped off the field, and the girls protested that the game was too rough and dangerous.

"All right," said Archie, "but I bet I'll drive a croquet ball farther than you two

girls put together."

Mr. and Mrs. Bindloss retired to the

security of the drawing-room.

"He's a very curious boy," said Mr. Bindloss, rubbing his ankle.

"I'm sure he's really very nice. I expect he improves on acquaintance," replied his

There was a sudden terrific crash, and they rushed to the window. Archie had driven his ball right through the glass of the tomato house.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" Mr. Bindloss

called out feebly.

It required great tact to dissuade the young gentleman from continuing this game without being definitely rude to him. It was not till he had trampled on a bed of lupins, broken a croquet mallet, and nearly knocked Mildred's eye out that they were able to get him to turn his attention to something else.

The nerves of Mr. Bindloss were getting on edge. He was accustomed to an afternoon nap, but, of course, such a thing was out of the question on a day like this. He was inclined to be querulous with his wife, an attitude which was hotly resented.

"You never think of the girls' interests,"

she said.

"Interests!" exclaimed Mr. Bindloss. "A nice sort of son-in-law he'd make.

wish he'd go."

'He's getting on very well," said Mrs. Bindloss, looking out of the window. "I'm sure he's enjoying himself." Then she added breathlessly: "Julian, would you believe it? He's—he's kissing Gwen in the tomato house!"

" Kissing!"

"Yes, he's got his arm round her waist." "Well, I—I really—I—what ought we to

"Leave them alone. They are only children. Besides-

She turned from the window and took up some knitting. There was silence from the garden for nearly twenty minutes. Then Mildred came running in.

"I say, mother, Archie says he feels

sick," she exclaimed, excitedly.

"Sick!" exclaimed Mrs. Bindloss. "Sick!" echoed Mr. Bindloss.

"Yes; he looks it, too."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" exclaimed both the parents. They hurried out into the garden. There was Archie sitting on the grass fanning himself. He certainly looked very queer.

"Oh, my dear Archie," exclaimed Mrs. Bindloss, "I'm so sorry. Won't you come in? Let me get you something. Hadn't you better lie down?"

He said "Yes," and they led him in. looked so ill that they took him up to Mr. Bindloss's bedroom, and got him to lie down on the bed.

"Gwen," said Mrs. Bindloss, "run down the road and see if Dr. Burns is in. I'm sure Archie's mother would like us to have

a doctor to him."

They gave him a little soda-water and left him. Gwen went for the doctor. And while she was gone a most surprising thing happened. A telegram arrived addressed to "Bindloss." Mrs. Bindloss naturally opened it, and, having opened it, gave a gasp of astonishment. She handed the telegram to her husband. It ran as follows:—

" Archie has mumps regret could not send

him. Northallerton.'

Mr. Bindloss repeated the word "mumps" three times, and stared helplessly at his

"What does it mean?" said Mrs. Bindloss, savagely, as though accusing her hus-

band of some wicked treachery.

"How can they say they couldn't send him when he's upstairs all the time lying on my bed?" said Mr. Bindloss, as though he had made a brilliant riposte.

"He must have escaped," interjected

Mildred.

Mr. Bindloss was feverishly biting his

nails. Suddenly he waggled his first finger at his wife.

"Does anything strike you? Does anything strike you?" he said.
"What?"

"He's got mumps. That's what is the matter with him. When he arrived I thought he had double chins. But he's got mumps."

Mrs. Bindloss gasped.

"He's got mumps, and he's been kissing the girls, and now he's lying on my bed."

"It's an outrage," screamed Mrs. Bind-

"What can we do?"

"The only thing we can do is to wait for the doctor and then telegraph to Mrs. Northallerton."

WENDOLINE happened to catch the doctor starting on his rounds. He came in, and he and the two parents went up to the bedroom. The doctor examined the boy.

"Yes," he said, "he's got mumps all right. He must remain here and not be

moved."

"Oh, my dear Archie!" said Mrs. Bindloss. "What a pity you didn't tell us! But look here, my dear, here's a most curious telegram from your mother.

Archie was sorry for himself, and surly. He read the telegram and said :-

"That's not from my mother."

"How do you mean?"

"My mother's name is Bloggs." "What!" yelled Mr. Bindloss.

"You never asked me my name. going out to do a bit of fishing, and you asked me home to lunch. That's all."

"But we called you Archie."

"My name is Archie. Archie Bloggs." "But the maroon and black cap!

"Yes, I know. I go to Headingly. I know young Northallerton, awful little ass. There was an epidemic of mumps just as the school broke up."

"But who the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Bindloss—"I mean, who is your father?"

"Don't you know? Bloggs's Sausages." Mrs. Bindloss was nearly in tears.

"Do you mean to say we've taken all this trouble and your father is only a sausage——"

Mr. Bindloss saw red.

"It's an outrage!" he yelled. "I shall prosecute you. You come here and get a good meal on false pretences. You smash up the drawing-room. You smash the greenhouse and the croquet mallet. You nearly break my leg. And on the top of it you go kissing the girls with mumps on you, and all the time you're not-you're not who you're supposed to be. You're only the son of a



They hurried out into the garden. There was Archie sitting on the grass fanning himself. He certainly looked very queer.

sausage—— By gad! I'll have you locked up."

The doctor intervened.

"You must excuse me, Mr. and Mrs. Bindloss. As I'm here in a professional capacity, I must ask you to keep the patient quiet. And he should not be moved from this room."

"We won't have him here."

"Well, that's not my business. I've given you my advice."

And the doctor went.

THERE are many people in Tibbelsford who consider that Mr. and Mrs. Bindloss behaved heartlessly in this matter. It is a point of controversy to this day. The visit from an indignant Mr. Samuel Bloggs, the father, did not help, perhaps, to pour oil on the troubled waters. There was certainly an acrimonious argument, and various cross threats of legal proceedings, but in the end the boy was sent home in an ambulance. The critics of the parents' behaviour did not, of course, know the inner history of their

spiritual duress. People are apt to underestimate what parents will suffer for their children's interests, what indignities they will submit to. The girls fortunately did not get mumps, and two days later Mrs. Bindloss wrote to Mrs. Northallerton:—

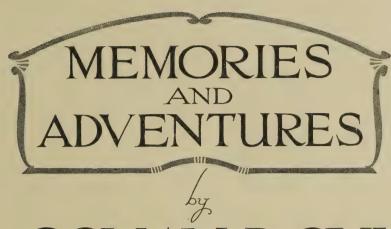
" Dear Mrs. Northallerton,-

"We were so grieved to hear about dear Archie. I do hope he is making a good recovery. We waited lunch nearly three-quarters of an hour for him. I hope before the holidays are over he will be well enough to come over for the day, and that you will be able to accompany him. It was so sweet of you to have tried to arrange it, and to have sent us the telegram. My husband joins me in sending our very best greetings, and hopes for Archie's speedy recovery.

"Believe me, dear Mrs. Northallerton,
"Yrs vy sincerely,
"CORA BINDLOSS."

That is the kind of woman Mrs. Bindloss is. And that is the kind of spirit that has built cities, founded colonies, and enlarged empires.





A.CONAN DOYLE

CHAPTER XIV.—continued.

Some Notable People.

SIR JAMES BARRIE. GRAROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. JAM SIR HENRY THOMPSON.

GRANT ALLEN. JAMES PAYN.

AMES BARRIE is one of my oldest literary friends, and I knew him within a year or two of the time when we hath some two londers. He had just the

a year or two of the time when we both came to London. He had just written his "Window in Thrums," and I, like all the world, acclaimed it. When I

like all the world, acclaimed it. was lecturing in Scotland in 1893, he invited me to Kirriemuir, when I stayed some days with his family—splendid types of the folk who have made Scotland great. His father was a fine fellow, but his mother was wonderful, with a head and a heart—rare combinations—which made me class her with my own mother. Kirriemuir could by no means understand Barrie's success, and looked upon their great son as an inexplicable phenome-

non. They were acutely aware, however, that tourists were arriving from all parts to see the place on account of Barrie's books. "I suppose you have read them?" I said to the wife of the local hotel man. "Aye, I've read them, and steep, steep, weary work it was," said she. She had some theory that it was a four-horse coach which her

good man was running, and not the books at all, which accounted for the boom.

Great as are Barrie's plays—and some of them I think are very great—I wish he had never written a line for the theatre. The glamour of it and the—to him—easy success

have diverted from literature the man with the purest style of his age. Plays are always ephemeral, however good, and are limited to a few, but Barrie's unborn books might have been an eternal and a universal asset of British literature. He has the chaste clarity which is the great style, which has been debased by a generation of wretched critics who have always confused what is clear with what is shallow, and what is turbid with what is

profound. If a man's thought is precise, his rendering of it is precise, and muddy thoughts make obscure paragraphs. If I had to make my choice among modern stylists, I should pick Barrie for the lighter forms of expression and our British Winston Churchill for the more classical.

Barrie's great play—one of the finest in



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the language—is, of course, "The Admirable Crichton." I shall always hope that I had a hand in the fashioning of it. I say this not in complaint, but in satisfaction, for we all drop seeds into each other, and seldom know whence they come. We were walking together on the heath at Kirriemuir when I said, "I had a quaint thought in the night, Barrie. It was that a king was visiting India, and was wrecked on the way on some island far from the track of ships. Only he and one rather handy sailor were saved. They settled down to spend their lives together. Of course, the result would be that the sailor would become the king and the king the subject." We chuckled over the idea, and when "Crichton" appeared I seemed to see the fine plant which had grown from the tiny seed.

Barrie and I had one rather unfortunate

venture together, in which I may say that the misfortune was chiefly mine, since I had really nothing to do with the matter, and yet shared all the trouble. However, I should have shared the honour and profit in case of success, so that I have no right to grumble. The facts were that Barrie had promised Mr. D'Oyly Carte that he would provide the libretto of a light opera for the Savoy. This was in the Gilbert days, when such a libretto was judged by a very high standard. It was an extraordinary commission for him to accept, and I have never yet been able to understand why he did so, unless, like Alexander, he wanted fresh worlds to conquer. On this occasion, however, he met with a set-back, and the opera, "Jane Annie," was one of the few failures in his brilliant career.

I was brought into the matter because Barrie's health failed on account of some family bereavement. I had an urgent telegram from him at Aldeburgh, and, going there, I found him very worried because he had bound himself by this contract, and he felt in his present state unable to go forward with it. There were to be two acts, and he had written the first one, and had the rough scenario of the second, with the complete sequence of events-if one may call it a sequence. Would I come in with him and help him to complete it as partauthor? Of course I was very happy to serve him in any way. My heart sank, however, when, after giving the promise, I examined the work. Ideas and wit were there in abundance, but the form was bad. Also the plot itself was a feeble thing, with colourless characters, male and female, though the dialogue and the situations also were occasionally excellent. I did my best and wrote the lyrics for the second act and much of the dialogue, but it had to take the predestined shape. The result was not good,

and on the first night I felt inclined, like Charles Lamb, to hiss it from my box. However, the actual comradeship of production was very amusing and interesting, and our failure was mainly painful to us because it let down the producer and the cast. were well abused by the critics, but Barrie took it all in the bravest spirit, and I still retain the comic verses of consolation which I received from him next morning.

I also find in looking over my papers a belated statement of account from Barrie

which is good reading :-

IN ACCOUNT WITH J. M. BARRIE. Cause of delay Remarks A £1 Object moving too fast Lent at Station Doyle says he lent it "Jane Annie" on Tour B £12 Moving or Better late swaying of Kodak than never C £30 6 4 Heaven knows Failure to pull Doyle gets 2/5 of a penny beyond his share

Our association was never so closely renewed, but through all my changing life I have had a respect and affection for Barrie which was, I hope, mutual. How I collaborated with him at cricket as well as at work is told in my chapter on Sport.



NEVER met Robert Louis Stevenson in the flesh, though I owe so much to him in the literary spirit. Never can I forget the delight with which I read those early stories of his in the Cornhill before I knew the name of the author. I still think that "The Pavilion on the Links" is one of the great short stories of the world,

though there were alterations in the final form which were all for the worse and showed prudery upon the part of the publishers. Stevenson's last year at Edinburgh University must have just about coincided with my first one, and Barrie must also have been in that grey old nest of learning about the year 1876. Strange to think that I probably brushed elbows with both of them in the crowded portal.

From his far-away home in Samoa he seemed to keep a quick eye upon literary matters in England, and I had most encouraging letters from him in 1893 and '94. "O frolic fellow-spookist" was his curious term of personal salutation in one of these. which showed that he shared my interest in psychic research but did not take it very seriously. I cannot guess how at that time he had detected it in me, though I was aware that he had himself in early days acted as secretary to a Psychic Research or rather to a Spiritualist Society in Edinburgh, which studied the remarkable mediumship of Duguid. His letters to me consisted of kind appreciations of my work. "I have a great talent for compliment," he said, "accompanied by a hateful, even a diabolic, frankness." He had been retailing some of my Sherlock Holmes yarns to his native servants-I should not have thought that he needed to draw upon anyone else-and he complained to me in a comical letter of . the difficulty of telling a story when you had to halt every moment to explain what a railway was, what an engineer was, and so He "got the story across" in spite of all difficulties, and, said he, " if you could have seen the bright feverish eyes of Simite you would have tasted glory." explained that the natives took everything literally and that there was no such thing as an imaginary story for them. "I who write this have had the indiscretion to perpetuate a trifling piece of fiction, 'The Bottle Imp.' Parties who come up to visit my mansion, after having admired the ceiling by Vanderputty and the tapestry by Gobbling, manifest towards the end a certain uneasiness which proves them to be fellows of an infinite delicacy. They may be seen to shrug a brown shoulder, to roll up a speaking eye, and at last the secret bursts from them, 'Where is the bottle?'"

In another letter he said that as I had written of my first book in the *Idler* he also would do so. "I could not hold back where the white plume of Conan Doyle waved in front of me." So at least I may hope that it is to me that the world owes the little personal sketch about "Treasure Island" which appeared in that year. I cannot forget the shock that it was to me when, driving down the Strand in a hansom cab in 1894, I saw upon a yellow evening poster, "Death of R. L. Stevenson." Something seemed to have passed out of my world.

I was asked by his executors to finish the novel, "St. Ives," which he had left three-quarters completed, but I did not feel equal to the task. It was done, however, and, I understand, very well done, by Quiller-Couch. It is a desperately difficult thing to carry on another man's story, and must be a more or less mechanical effort.

HAD one experience of carrying on another man's work when my neighbour at Hindhead, Grant Allen, was on his death-bed. He was much worried because there were two numbers of his serial, "Hilda Wade," which was running in The Strand Magazine, still uncompleted. It was a pleasure for me

to do them for him, and so relieve his mind, but it was difficult collar work, and I expect they were pretty bad. Some time afterwards a stranger, who evidently confused Allen and me, wrote to say that his wife had given



him a baby girl, and that in honour of me he was calling her Hilda Wade. He was really nearer the truth than appeared at first sight.

Î well remember that death-bed of Grant Allen's. He was an agnostic of a type which came very near atheism, though in his private life an amiable and benevolent man.

Believing what he did, the approach of death must have offered rather a bleak prospect, and as he had paroxysms of extreme pain the poor fellow seemed very miserable. I had often argued the case with him, I from a theistic and he from a negative point of view, but I did not intrude my opinions or disturb his mind at that solemn moment. Death-bed changes, though some clergy may rejoice in them, are really vain things. His brain, however, was as clear as ever, and his mind was occupied with all manner of strange knowledge, which he imparted in the intervals of his pain, in the curious high nasal voice which was characteristic. I can see him now, his knees drawn up to ease internal pain, and his long, thin nose and reddish-grey goatee protruding over the sheet, while he croaked out: " Byzantine art, my dear Doyle, was of three periods, the middle one roughly coinciding with the actual fall of the Roman Empire. The characteristics of the first periodand so on, until he would give a cry, clasp his hands across his stomach, and wait till the pain passed before resuming his lecture. His dear little wife nursed him devotedly, and mitigated the gloom of those moments which can be made soothed and happy if one understands what lies before one. One thinks as a contrast of Dr. Hodgson's impatient cry, "I can hardly wait for death!'

Grant Allen's strong opinions in print, and a certain pleasure he took in defending outside positions, gave quite a false view of his character, which was gentle and benignant. I remember his coming to a fancy-dress ball which we gave, in the character of a Cardinal, and in that guise all the quiet dignity of the man seemed to come out, and you realized how much our commonplace modern dress disguises the real man. He used to tell with great amusement how a couple, who afterwards became



"Oh, sir, Araminta has got a wasp!"

close friends, came first to call, and how as they waited on the doorstep the wife said to the husband, "Remember, John, if he openly blasphemes I leave the room." He had, I remember, very human relations with the maids, who took a keen interest in their employer's scientific experiments. On one occasion these were connected with spiders, and the maid rushed into the drawing-room and cried: "Oh, sir, Araminta has got a wasp!" Araminta was the name given to the big spider which he was observing at the time.

Grant Allen had no natural call to write fiction, but his brain was agile enough to make some sort of job of anything to which it turned. On the other hand, as a popular scientist he stood alone, or shared the honour only with Samuel Laing. His only real success in fiction was the excellent short story "John Creedy," where he combined science with fiction, with remarkable results.

At the time when I and so many others turned to letters there was certainly a

wonderful vacancy for the new-comer. The giants of old had all departed. Thackeray, Dickens, Charles Reade, and Trollope were memories. There was no great figure memories. Mrs. Humphry Ward was just remaining. beginning her career with "Robert Elsmere," the first of that series of novels which will illuminate the later Victorian era more clearly than any historian ever can do. I think it was Hedgkins who said, when he read "Count Robert of Paris": "Here have I been studying Byzantium all my life, and I never understood it until this blessed Scotch lawyer made it clear to me." That is the special prerogative of imagina-Trollope and Mrs. Ward have the whole Victorian civilization dissected and preserved.

Then there was Meredith, unintelligible to most, and Walter Besant, with the big, unselfish soul, who took more interest in the well-being of his own profession than anyone before or since. There was Wilkie Collins, too, with his fine stories of mystery, and

finally there was James Payn.

AYN was much greater than his books. The latter were usually rather mechanical, but to get at the real man one has to read such essays as his "Literary Reminiscences," and especially "The Backwater of Life." He had all that humorous view which Nature seems to give as a compensation to those whose strength is weak. Had Payn written only essays he would have rivalled Charles Lamb. I knew him best in his latter days, when he was crippled with illness, and his poor fingers so twisted with rheumatic arthritis that they seemed hardly He was intensely pessimistic as to his own fate. "Don't make any mistake, Doyle, death is a horrible thing-horrible! I suffer the agonies of the damned!" But five minutes later he would have his audience roaring with laughter, and his own high treble laugh would be the loudest

His own ailments were frequently a source of mirth. I remember how he described the breaking of a blood-vessel while he was staying in Bournemouth, and how they carried him home in a litter. He was dimly conscious of the fir woods through which he passed. "I thought it was my funeral, and that they had done me well in the matter cf plumes." When he told a story he was so carried away by his sense of humour that he could hardly get the end out, and he finished up in a kind of scream. An American had called upon him at some late hour and had discoursed upon Assyrian tablets. "I thought they were something to eat," he screamed.

He was an excellent whist player, and the Baldwin Club used to send three members to his house on certain days so that the old fellow should not go without his game. That game was very scientific. He would tell with delight how he asked some novice, "Do you play the penultimate?" To which the novice answered, "No, but my

brother plays the American organ.

Many of my generation of authors had reason to love him, for he was a human and kindly critic. His handwriting, however, was really dreadful. It was of him that the story was told that an author handed one of his letters to a chemist for a test. The chemist retired for a time and then returned with a bottle and demanded half a crown. Better luck attended the man who received an illegible letter from a railway director. He used it as a free pass upon the line. Payn used to joke about his own writing, but it was a very real trouble when one could not make out whether he had accepted or rejected one's story. There was one letter in which I could only read the words "infringement of copyright." He was very funny when he described the work of the robust younger school. "I have received a story from -," he said, "five thousand words, mostly damns."



KNEW Sir Henry Thompson, the famous surgeon, very well, and frequently honoured by an invitation to his octave dinners, at which eight carefully-chosen male guests were the company. They always seemed to me to be the most wonderful exhibitions of unselfishness,

for Thompson was not allowed any alcohol, or anything save the most simple viands. Possibly, however, like Meredith and the bottle of Burgundy, he enjoyed some reflex pleasure from the enjoyment of others. He had been a wonderful viveur and judge of what was what, and I fear that I disappointed him, for I was much more interested in the conversation than the food, and it used to annoy me when some argument was interrupted in order to tell us that it was not ordinary ham but a Westphalian wild boar that we were eating, and that it had been boiled in wine for precisely the right time prescribed by the best authorities. But it was part of his wenderful unselfish hospitality to make his guests realize exactly what it was that was set before them. I have never heard more interesting talk than at these male gatherings, for it is notorious that, though ladies greatly improve the appearance of a feast, they invariably detract from the quality of the talk. Few men are ever absolutely natural when there are women in the room.

There was one special dinner—I fancy it was the hundredth of the series—which was particularly interesting, as the Prince of Wales, now George the Fifth, was one of the eight, and gave us a most interesting account of the voyage round the world from which he had just returned. Of the rest of the company I can only recall Sir Henry Stanley, the traveller, and Sir Crichton Browne. Twenty years later I met the King when he visited a trade exhibition, and I attended as one of the directors of Tuck's famous postcard firm. He at once said, "Why, I have not seen you since that pleasant dinner when you sat next to me at Sir Henry Thompson's." It seemed to me to be a remarkable example of the Royal gift of memory.

I have not often occupied a chair among the seats of the mighty. My life has been too busy and too preoccupied to allow me to stray far from my beaten path. The

mention of the Prince, however, reminds me of the one occasion when I was privileged to entertain—or to attempt to entertain—the present Queen. It was at a small dinner to which I was invited by the courtesy of Lord Midleton, whose charming wife, once Madeleine Stanley, daughter of Lady St. Helier, I could remember since her girlhood. Upon this occasion the Prince and Princess came in after dinner, the latter sitting alone at one end of the room with a second chair beside her own, which was occupied successively by the various gentlemen who were

to be introduced to her. I was led up in due course, made my bow, and sat down at her request. I confess that I found it heavy going at first, for I had heard somewhere that Royalty has to make the first remark, and had it been the other way there was such a gulf between us that I should not have known where to begin. However, she was very pleasant and gracious, and began asking me some questions about my works which brought me on to very easy ground. Indeed, I became so interested in our talk that I was quite disappointed when Mr. John Morley was led up and I realized that it was time for me to received. realized that it was time for me to vacate the chair.

There was another amusing incident upon that eventful evening. I had been asked to take in Lady Curzon, whose husband, then Viceroy of India, had been unable to attend. The first couple had passed in,



Mr. John Morley was led up and I realized that it was time for me to vacate the chair.

we filed through. I thought nothing of the incident, but some authority upon these matters came to me afterwards in great excitement. "Do you know," he said, "that you have established a precedent and solved one of the most difficult and debatable matters of etiquette that have ever caused ill-feeling in British Society?" "Indeed!" said I, trying to look wise.
"The Lord Chancellor and the College of Heralds should be much obliged to you, for you have given them a definite lead. There has never been so vexed a question as whether a Vicereine, when she is away from the country where she represents Royalty, shall take precedence over a duchess.. There was a duchess in the room, but you, by your decided action, have settled the matter for ever." So who shall say that I have done nothing in my life?

CHAPTER XV.

SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF SPORT.*

S one grows old one looks back at one's career in sport as a thing completed. Yet I have at least held on to it as long as I could, for I played a hard match of Association football at forty-four, and I played cricket for ten years more. But if I have never specialized, and have, therefore, been a second-rater in all things, I have made up for it by being an all-rounder, and have had. I dare say, as much fun out of sport as many an adept. It would be odd if a man could try as many games as I for so many years without having some interesting experiences or forming a few opinions which would bear

recording and discussion.

And, first of all, let me "damn the sins I have no mind to" by recording what most of my friends will regard as limitations. I never could look upon flat-racing as a true sport. Sport is what a man does, not what a horse does. Skill and judgment are shown, no doubt, by the professional jockeys, but I think it may be argued that in nine cases out of ten the best horse wins, and would have equally won, could his head be kept straight, had there been a dummy on his back. But making every allowance on the one side for what human qualities may be called forth, and for any improvement of the breed of horses (though I am told that the same pains in other directions would produce infinitely more fruitful and generally useful results), and putting on the other side the demoralization from betting, the rascality among some bookmakers, and the collection of undesirable characters brought together by a race-meeting, I cannot avoid the conclusion that the harm greatly outweighs the good from a broadly national point of view, Yet I recognize, of course, that it is an amusement which lies so deeply in human nature—the oldest, perhaps, of all amusements which have come down to us-that it must have its place in our system until the time may come when it will be gradually modified, developing, perhaps, some purifying change, as prize-fighting did when it turned to contests with the gloves.

I have purposely said "flat-racing" because I think a stronger case, though not, perhaps, an entirely sound one, could be made out for steeplechasing. Eliminate the mob and the money, and then, surely, among feats of human skill and hardihood there are not many to match that of the winner of a really stiff point-to-point, while the man who rides at the huge barriers of the Grand National has a heart for anything. As in the old days of the ring, it is not the men or the sport, but it is the followers who cast a shadow on the business. Go down to Waterloo and meet any returning race ' train, if you doubt it.

F I have alienated half my readers by my critical attitude to the Tout bably offend the other half by stating that I cannot persuade myself that we are justified in taking life as a pleasure. To shoot for the pot must be right, since man must feed, and to kill creatures which live upon others (the hunting of foxes, for example) must also be right, since to slay one is to save many; but the rearing of birds in order to kill them, and the shooting of such sensitive and inoffensive animals as hares and deer, cannot, I think, be justified.

I must admit that I had shot a good deal before I came to this conclusion. Perhaps the fact, while it prevents my assuming any airs of virtue, will give my opinion greater weight, since good shooting is still within my reach, and I know nothing more exhilarating than to wait on the borders of an autumn-tinted wood, to hear the crackling advance of beaters, to mark the sudden whir and the yell of "Mark over," and then, over the topmost branches, to see a noble cock pheasant whizzing down wind at a pace which pitches him a hundred yards behind you when you have dropped him.

^{*} Portions of this chapter appeared in The Strand Magazine many years ago, but are here reprinted in order to preserve the continuity of the narrative.

when your moment of exultation is over. and you note what a beautiful creature he is and how one instant of your pleasure has wrecked him, you feel that you had better think no longer if you mean to slip two more cartridges into your gun and stand by for another. Worse still is it when you hear the child-like wail of the wounded hare. I should think that there are few sportsmen who have not felt a disgust at their own handiwork when they have heard it. too, when you see the pheasant fly on with his legs showing beneath him as sign that he is hard hit. He drops into the thick woods and is lost to sight. Perhaps it is as well for your peace of mind that he should be lost to thought also.

Of course, one is met always by the perfectly valid argument that the creatures would not live at all if it were not for the purposes of sport, and that it is presumably better from their point of view that they should eventually meet a violent death than that they should never have existed. No doubt this is true. But there is another side of the question, as to the effect of the sport upon ourselves—whether it does not blunt our own better feelings, harden our sympathies, brutalize our natures. A coward can do it as well as a brave man; a weakling can do it as well as a strong man. There is no ultimate good from it. Have we a moral right, then, to kill creatures for amusement? I know many of the best and most kind-hearted men who do it, but still I feel that in a more advanced age it will no longer be possible.

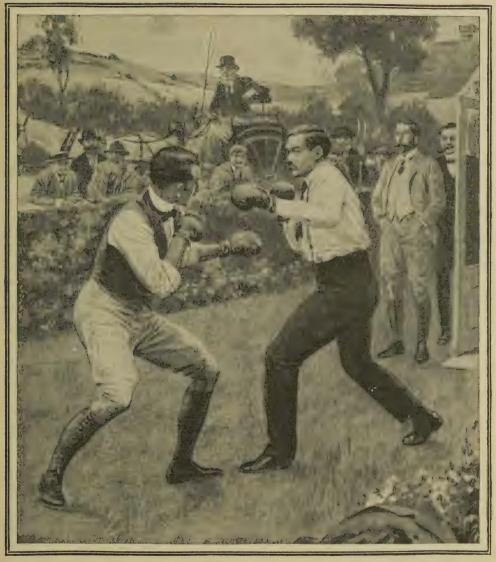
AND yet I am aware of my own inconsistency when I say I am in with fishing, and would gladly have a little if I knew where to get it. And yet, is it wholly inconsistent? Is a cold-blooded creature of low organization like a fish to be regarded in the same way as the hare which cries out in front of the beagles, or the deer which may carry the rifle bullet away in its side? If there is any cruelty it is surely of a much less degree. Besides, is it not the sweet solitude of Nature, the romantic quest, rather than the actual capture, which appeals to the fisherman? One thinks of the stories of trout and salmon which have taken another fly within a few minutes of having broken away from a former one, and one feels that their sense of pain must be very different from our own.

I once had the best of an exchange of fishing stories, which does not sound like a testimonial to my veracity. It was in a Birmingham inn, and a commercial traveller was boasting of his successes. I ventured to back the weight of the last three fish which I had been concerned in catching

against any day's take of his lifetime. He closed with the bet and quoted some large haul, a hundred pounds or more. "Now, sir," he asked, triumphantly, "what was the weight of your three fish?" "Just over two hundred tons," I answered. "Whales?" "Yes, three Greenland whales." "I give you best," he cried; but whether as a fisherman or as a teller of fish stories I am not sure. As a matter of fact, I had only returned that year from the Arctic Seas, and the three fish in question were, in truth, the last which I had helped to catch.

HAVE always been keen upon the noble old English sport of boxing, and, though of no particular class myself, I suppose I might describe my form as that of a fair average amateur. I should have been a better man had I taught less and learned more, but after my first tuition I had few chances of professional teaching. However, I have done a good deal of mixed boxing among many different types of men, and had as much pleasure from it as from any form of sport. It stood me in good stead aboard the whaler. Upon the very first evening I had a strenuous bout with the steward, who was an excellent sportsman. I heard him afterwards, through the partition of the cabin, declare that I was "the best sur-r-rgeon we've had, Colin-he's blacked my ee." It struck me as a singular test of my medical

ability, but I dare say it did no harm.
I remember when I was a medical practitioner going down to examine a man's life for insurance in a little Sussex village. He was the gentleman farmer of the place, and a most sporting and jovial soul. It was a Saturday, and I enjoyed his hospitality that evening, staying over till Monday. After breakfast it chanced that several neighbours dropped in, one of whom, an athletic young farmer, was fond of the gloves. Conversation soon brought out the fact that I had a weakness in the same direction. The result was obvious. Two pairs of gloves were hunted from some cupboard, and in a few minutes we were hard at it, playing light at first and letting out as we warmed. It was soon clear that there was no room inside a house for two heavy-weights, so we adjourned to the front lawn. The main road ran across the end of it, with a low wall of just the right height to allow the village to rest its elbows on it and enjoy the spectacle. We fought several very brisk rounds, with no particular advantage either way, but the contest always stands out in my memory for its queer surroundings and the old English picture in which it was set. It is one of several curious by-battles in my career.



It was soon clear that there was no room inside a house for two heavy-weights, so we adjourned to the front lawn.

I recollect another curious encounter when I and another, returning from a ball in the first light of a summer morning, got talking upon the subject. Our talk ended by my going into his rooms, where we put on the gloves, and in our dress clothes, minus the coats, fought, without spectators, several rather murderous rounds.

They say that every form of knowledge comes useful sooner or later. Certainly my own experience in boxing and my very large acquaintance with the history of the prize-ring found their scope when I wrote "Rodney Stone." No one but a fighting man would ever, I think, quite understand or appreciate some of the detail. A friend of mine read the scene where Boy Jim fights Berks to a prize-fighter as he lay in what proved to be his last illness. The man listened with growing animation until the reader came to the point where the second advises Boy Jim, in technical jargon, how to get at his awkward antagonist. "That's it! By God, he's got him!" shouted the man in the bed. It was an incident which gave me pleasure when I heard it.

I have never concealed my opinion that the old prize-ring was an excellent thing from a national point of view— exactly as glovefighting is now. Better that our sports should be a little too rough than that we should run a risk of effeminacy. But the ring outlasted its time. It was ruined by the villainous mobs who cared nothing for the chivalry of sport or the traditions of British fair play as compared to the money gain which the contest might bring. Their blackguardism drove out the good men—the men who really did uphold the ancient standards, and so the whole institution passed into rottenness and decay. But now the glove contests carried on under the discipline of the National Sporting or other clubs perpetuate the noble old sport without a possibility of the more evil elements creeping into it once more. have an exhibition of hardihood without brutality, of good-humoured courage without savagery, of skill without trickery, is, I think, the very highest which sport can give. People may smile at the gloves, but a twenty-round contest with four-ounce gloves is quite as punishing an ordeal as one could wish to endure. There is as little room for a coward as in the rougher days of old, and the standard of endurance is probably as high as in the average prizefight.

One wonders how our champions of to-day would have fared at the hands of the heroes of the past. I know something of this end of the question, for I have seen nearly all the great boxers of my time, from J. L. Sullivan down to Tommy Burns, Carpentier, Bombardier Wells, Beckett, and that little miracle Jimmy Wilde. But how about the other end-the men of old? Wonderful Jem Mace was the only link between On the one hand, he was supreme in the 'sixties as a knuckle-fighter; on the other, he gave the great impetus to glovefighting in America, and more especially in Australia, which has brought over such champions as Frank Slavin and Fitzsimmons. who, through Mace's teaching, derive straight from the classic line of British boxers. He of all men might have drawn a just comparison between the old and the new. But even his skill and experience might be at fault, for it is notorious that many of the greatest fighters under the old régime were poor hands with the gloves. Men could bang poor Tom Sayers all round the ring with the gloves who would not have dared to get over the ropes had he been without them. I have seen Mace box, and even when over sixty it was won-derful how straight was his left, how quick his feet, and how impregnable his guard.

AFTER the Great War, one can see that those of us who worked for the revival of boxing wrought better than we knew, for at the supreme test of all time, the test which has settled the history of the future, it has played a marked part. I do not mean that a man used his fists in the war, but I mean—and every experienced in-structor will, I am sure, endorse it—that the combative spirit and aggressive quickness gave us the attacking fire and helped especially in bayonet work. But it was to our allies of France that the chief advantage came. I believe that Carpentier the boxer did more to win the war for France than any other man save the actual generals The public proof that a or politicians. Frenchman could be at the very head of his class, as Ledoux was also at a lighter weight, gives a physical self-respect to a nation which tinges the spirit of every single member of it. It was a great day for the French when English sports—boxing, Rugby football, and others—came across to them, and when a young man's ideal ceased to be amatory adventure, with an occasional duel. England has taught Europe much, but nothing of more value than this.

To return to my own small experiences of the game, I might have had one very notable one, for I was asked to referee the great contest when the champions of the white and black races fought for what may prove to be the last time. My first intimation was a cable, followed by this

letter :--

New York, December 9, 1909.

My dear Sir,-

I hope you will pardon the liberty I took as a stranger in cabling to you asking if you would act at the championship battle between Jeffries and Johnson. The fact is that when the articles were signed recently your name was suggested for referee, and Tex Rickard, promoter of the fight, was greatly interested, as were many others. I believe it will interest you to know that the opinion was unanimous that you would do admirably in the position. In a voting contest several persons sent in your name as their choice. Believe me, among sporting men of the best class in America you have many strong admirers; your splendid stories of the ring and your avowed admiration for the great sport of boxing have made you thousands of friends.

It was because of this extremely friendly feeling for you in America that I took the liberty of cabling to you. I thank you for

your reply.

It would indeed rejoice the hearts of the men in this country if you were at the ringside when the great negro fighter meets the white man Jeffries for the world's championship.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,
IRVING JEFFERSON LEWIS.
Managing Editor,
"New York Morning Telegraph."

I was much inclined to accept this honourable invitation, though my friends pictured me as winding up with a revolver at one ear and a razor at the other. However, the distance and my engagements presented a final bar.

fall into line, and are already taking the same high position which they hold in other branches of sport. I hope that our public schools will follow the same course.

In spite of my wretched training, I played for a time as a forward in the Edinburgh University team, but my want of knowledge of the game was too heavy a handicap. Afterwards I took to Association, and played first goal and then back for Portsmouth when that famous club was an amateur organization. Even then we could put a very fair team in the field, and were runners-



The fight at Crawley Down-a scene from the dramatic version of "Rodney Stone."

TF boxing is the finest single-man sport, I think that Rugby football is the best collective one. Strength, courage, speed, and resource are great qualities to include in a single game. I have always wished that it had come more my way in life, but my football was ruined, as many a man's is, by the fact that at my old school they played a hybrid game peculiar to the place, with excellent points of its own, but unfitting the youngster for any other. All these local freak games, wall games, Winchester games, and so on, are national misfortunes; for while our youths are wasting their energies upon them—those precious early energies which make the instinctive players—the young South African or New Zealander is brought up on the real universal Rugby, and so comes over to pluck a few more laurel leaves out of our depleted wreath. In Australia they have, in Victoria, a hybrid, though excellent, game of their own; but they have had the sense, in other parts, to

up for the County Cup the last season that I played. In the same season I was invited to play for the county. I was always too slow, however, to be a really good back, though I was a long and safe kick. After a long hiatus I took up football again, in South Africa, and organized a series of interhospital matches in Bloemfontein which helped to take our minds away from enteric. My old love treated me very scurvily, however, for I received a foul from a man's knee which buckled two of my ribs and brought my games to a close. I have played occasionally since, but there is no doubt that as a man grows older a brisk charge shakes him up as it never did before. Let him turn to golf, and be thankful that there is still one outdoor game which can never desert him. There may be objections to the "ancient and royal," but a game which takes four miles of country for the playing must always have a majesty of its own.

(To be continued.)



"Seriously, my dear, 1 can't come! You know quite well I would if I could."

PHILANDERER

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY

HE stable-yard clock struck seven. Leonard Hardwyke, a fine, upstanding man, looking a good deal younger than his age, which was forty-one, jumped up from his chair. Time he went to see the lady whom he facetiously called his missus.

It was Christmas Eve, and to many a cheery house-party gathered together within a motor drive of Allways Place he would have been a welcome addition, had it not been that, according to his rather peculiar moral code, it was not fitting for him to be

away from his own quiet, shadowed house on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Other people might forget what Hardwyke owed to his wife, but he never forgot. At the time of their marriage he had been nearly penniless, and now he was for all practical purposes master of a large fortune.

As he was walking to the door of his pleasant study the telephone bell rang. He turned, took up the receiver, listened for a moment, then called back in a hearty, jovial tone, "Don't tempt me, Cissie! A good man—and I hope I'm a good man—does not leave his wife alone on Christmas Eve!"

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A slightly pettish voice answered: "What nonsense! You never see her after half-past eight—you told me so yourself, in the days when I used to feel so sorry for you."

Though he knew she couldn't see him he shook his head. "Seriously, my dear, I can't come. You know quite well I would if I could—" There was a tender vibration in his low, caressing voice. Even after he had wearied of a woman Hardwyke always went on being affectionate and courteous; so "Happy Christmas, darling," he murmured.

He heard her say angrily: "I won't wish you a happy Christmas, Leonard. You don't deserve one! You are a hypocrite! Going to spend a pleasant evening with Miss Akbar, I suppose?"

Before he could deny, with real vehemence, that unfair impeachment, Mrs. Lang-

don hung up the receiver.

Though vexed, he felt a little touched, too. Rather nice of her to be so disappointed, considering what old friends they were, and how long it was since—well, since he had made love to her.

Still, the word hypocrite stung him. Far from being a hypocrite Hardwyke never even pretended to other women than herself

that he had more than a grateful affection for his wife. What more could one ask from a man who had married, at twenty - nine, a woman who was forty-three, plain and sickly, and not over goodtempered? It hadn't always been easy, begad! But he had got away with it, and he was happier now than he had been at the beginning of his married life. In those early days, when his Annie used to be ridiculously jealous, it had been awkward, and some-

times very tiresome. But by dint of good humour, of showing her the little attentions that all women love, and also by—well, by being exceedingly careful, he had lulled her jealousy to sleep, and he was now far happier than many married men of his acquaintance. Life had become infinitely easier, too, since

Annie had subsided into being a regular invalid, living entirely upstairs in her own charming suite of rooms. Oddly enough she hated doctors, and that, from Hardwyke's point of view, was a good thing. It would have been such a bore if the house had always been full of medicos.

His mind took a sudden twist. He didn't envy the fellow who married Rosalind Akbar. There was a regular little spitfire

for you!

And then, as if his thought had brought her, the door opened and Miss Akbar, his wife's companion, came through it, her ardent glance enveloping him as in a blast of flame.

For a moment he felt queerly disconcerted, almost as though he had been caught out doing something he should not do. And yet that was far from being the case. On the contrary, with regard to this young woman he had acted with unusual good sense. Your born philanderer—and Hardwyke was a born philanderer—is very rarely tempted to assume the rôle of a Don Juan, and, when he is so tempted, that instinct of self-preservation, which is the strongest instinct of all, comes to his aid—and turns him from a Don Juan into a Joseph.

It was a long time—indeed, not since early October—since Miss Akbar had sought him out like this, in his own quarters.

"Mrs. Hardwyke is not well to-night," she said, quietly. "I'm afraid she will not be able to see you this evening."

"Then you think it unlikely that she will ask for me to-night?"

"I feel sure she will not do so."

There was a pause, and then, "May I go now?" she asked, with affected humility.

"You are a hypocrite! Going to spend a pleasant evening with Miss Akbar, I suppose?" when the opened the door for he

He opened the door for her, "Certainly, Miss Akbar, and thank you for coming yourself."

He shut the door slowly, then went over to the telephone. "16, Paringham, please—Cissie? What luck to catch you like this! My wife's not well, and I've just had a message to say she doesn't wish to be disturbed to-night, so I'll come along, if I

may, as soon as I've had dinner."

He heard the slightly mocking words. "Good business! No, I don't mean that, of course—I'm sorry Mrs. Hardwyke isn't well. But I'm glad you're coming, Len. I hope Miss Akbar won't be disappointed!"

He went to the fireplace and sat down, wondering, with a touch of uneasiness, how much local gossip lay behind that acrid remark. He and the girl certainly gave no cause for gossip now-for his wife's companion lived a life quite apart from his own. She had her own sitting-room, where she even took her meals, and though there had been a time when he had chafed at a state of things which had made it almost impossible for him to see much of Rosalind Akbar without the whole household be-coming aware of the fact, he was now very glad indeed that it was difficult for them to meet.

Yet how attractive she was! No wonder he had been so strangely and powerfully allured. To-night she was wearing a dull gold frock on which, stencilled here and there, were blue and green Chinese peacocks -emblems of bad luck. The sheaf-like garment showed every point of her beautiful, slender figure, and from the small opening of the neck rose the proud-looking little, narrow head, crowned with an aureole of dark, curling hair.

Then his mind reverted to the evening's amusement before him. He was touched and flattered at the genuine pleasure in

Cissie Langdon's voice.

There is something very pleasant to the average man in the knowledge that he is thoroughly well liked by a large circle of neighbours. True, when one is generous and rich, one is very apt to be liked by the people among whom one's lot is cast. Leonard Hardwyke was well aware that he had had to live down strong prejudice. Everyone in this old-fashioned country neighbourhood had fallen into the habit of thinking that Anne Allways was destined to remain for ever unmarried. That the wealthy, ill-tempered spinster lady, a susp:cious-natured invalid to boot, should suddenly return from Brighton one spring with a good-looking husband fourteen years younger than herself had been a nine days' wonder, and certain people had looked very askant, and for a long time, at Leonard Hardwyke.

Now the trouble was not that people disliked him, but that they liked him a thought

too much!

Over the shrewd, good-looking face there came a slight smile. The unkind might have called it a fatuous smile—for it was the smile of a man who knows, deep in his heart, that he is almost uncannily attractive to women.

And then he grew suddenly grave, for he had remembered once more Rosalind Akbar. It gave him a touch of discomfort to know that she was close by, on the other side of the house, probably thinking of him with mingled malignity and-well, why not call it "passion" to himself?

She had once talked wildly of killing herself, and it had frightened him badly.

THE fun at Paringham Hall was at its height, though some of the line was at its were beginning to think of the supper which was to be served immediately the children had been sent off to bed.

Because of the children all sorts of childish games had been played to-night, and now they had come to "Blind Man's Buff." Leonard Hardwyke was the only man over forty in the game, but, as he was in the pink of physical condition, he had enjoyed every minute of it. And the pleasantest minute of all had been that when he had caught the prettiest girl in the room, and, with her willing assent, refused for a whole half-minute to let her go!

They had all sat down to rest for a few moments when the door of the ballroom opened, and there appeared two smiling white-clad nurses. Behind them stood Glencomb, an old family servant who was on terms of respectful friendship with his master's most popular guest. As he had come into the house this evening Leonard Hardwyke had slipped a pound note into Glencomb's hand. "A happy Christmas!" he had exclaimed, and the man had looked at him full of gratified surprise; Mr. Hardwyke had indeed deserved his luck in being married to so rich a lady.

But while the nurses were calling to their unwilling charges to come to bed, there came a look of genuine distress on the butler's He threaded his way quietly among the chairs till he reached the place where Hardwyke was leaning over a fair lady murmuring, as was his way, pleasant somethings in her ear; and then, "Mr. Hard-wyke," he whispered, 'you are wanted on the telephone.

Hardwyke straightened himself. " All

right, Glencomb, I'm coming!"
But though his face remained unruffled and smiling, he felt really angry. At one time his wife's companion had fallen into the way of telephoning to him when he was lunching or dining out, and she would take any excuse, however trivial, or at any rate so it had seemed to him. He had told her at last never to telephone unless the matter was really urgent, and of late she had obeyed him.

As they were crossing the hall Glencomb said, quietly: "I'm afraid, sir, that you're going to hear bad news."

Hardwyke felt startled—nay, more.

frightened.

Good God! how awful it would be for him if that foolish girl had done anything terrible, irreparable! He had an inconveniently vivid imagination, and now he saw Rosalind Akbar stretched out on the floor of her sitting-room—the small automatic pistol which he had once seen in her possession lying by her side. . .

The telephone was in a tiny room leading to the domestic quarters of Paringham Hall, and after the butler had shut the door on him, Hardwyke, taking up the receiver, called out: "What's the matter?"

Silence—disconcerting silence.

He waited impatiently. And then, just as he was going to try and get through again, he heard the question uttered in a woman's voice, " Is that Mr. Hardwyke himself?"

His heart stood still, for it was not Rosalind Akbar's voice. "Yes, yes—of course

it is! Who are you?"

"I'm Miss Dakin, the parish nurse, Mr. Hardwyke. I'm afraid I'm going to give you a great shock. Mrs. Hardwyke is dead."

He was so amazed, so astounded, that the meaning of the words just uttered in that quiet, toneless voice did not carry their full significance to his brain.

He said in a dazed voice: "My wife-

dead?"

"She was already dead when I was sent for. It must have been very sudden."
"Is Dr. Fenner there?"

"He is out at a bad case, and they don't

expect him back for another hour."
"I see. Thank you. I'll come home at once, of course." As he went out of the room it was a comfort to see the butler waiting for him at the end of the passage.

"You were right, Glencomb. I've had very bad news. Mrs. Hardwyke has died suddenly. I must go home at once. Will you tell Mrs.

Langdon?"

"I feared it was something very serious, sir, from the way the lady spoke. I've sent round for your car, and meanwhile I do hope you'll just have a little supper— I've got it all ready on a tray for you.

There came a lump in Hardwyke's throat. What a good fellow Glencomb was! What good friends he had in every class of life! He put out his hand and clasped the other

man's, warmly.

And then, standing there in the stone passage, he began to eat the cold chicken and pâté-de-foie-gras mousse. But though

a few minutes ago he had felt quite hungry, he ate very little now. Still, he did manage to put away the whole of the half bottle of excellent champagne Glencomb had also

thoughtfully provided.

Poor Annie-poor, dear Annie! Well, he had made her as happy as any man could have made her. She had told him so, albeit a little grudgingly, on the occasion of his last birthday, when she had given him a big cheque to buy a new hunter. He remembered, too, that she had re-made her will this autumn, in deference to a suggestion of his. Several of the people to whom she had left money in her last will, made at the time of their marriage, had died.

N the daylight it took not much more than a quarter of an hour to reach Allways Place, but the chauffeur was agreeably aware that he had to deal with a master who never cared to take risks. Besides, where was the use of hurrying now? So Hardwyke had a little time for thought as he sat back in his luxurious car.

He told himself, as men are apt to tell themselves at such moments, that it's the unexpected which always happens in life. Why, the last time the great London specialist, who was the only doctor she liked, had seen his wife, he had said that he saw no reason why she shouldn't live till eighty! Hardwyke had always supposed that he would outlive her, a reasonable belief, as she was fourteen years older than himself, and during the first three or four years of their married life he had sometimes thought of what would happen when she died. But that kind of secret speculation had now been absent from his mind for a long time.

Yet how this unexpected event would alter his life! How it would free him from a kind of bondage he had never allowed to weigh on him, but which he had felt to be there—good God, yes!—all the time. Although they would both have denied it, it was, of course, a fact that he had never been free to go away, to do anything that he really wanted to do, without her permission. Poor Annie hadn't asked much of her husband, but he had almost always to be with her while she ate her lunch, when she drank her afternoon tea and during her plain little supper.

He had grown very fond of Allways Place, the charming Elizabethan manor-house of which he had become master in so curious and romantic a way—Hardwyke always liked to think of his marriage as curious and romantic-but, even so, how glad he would be to get away from it for a while!

He suddenly remembered, with a feeling of real gratitude and emotion, that with regard to that recent will of hers his wife had made one very important alteration. In her first will she had put in a clause common enough in men's wills, but uncommon in a woman's will. This was that in the case of his re-marriage he should only have a thousand a year. But she had cut out that clause, leaving him absolutely free, and sole owner of her considerable He thought with emotion that fortune. she needn't have altered that clause. Marry again? Not he! To Leonard Hardwyke's mind a rich bachelor's life was the ideal life.

III.

TE had thought Miss Akbar would meet him at the front door, and he was relieved to see no one there but his wife's old, old butler, a man whom it had taken him a long time to win round, but with whom he was now on the very best of terms. Why, there were actually tears in the old fellow's eyes. How touching!

"The parish nurse has stayed on, sir," said the man in a quavering voice. "She thought you might like to see her; she's in the study."

Hardwyke felt glad that no word was said as to Miss Akbar. He suspected that there had been, among the servants, just a leetle talk this last summer concerning his friendship with his wife's companion. That sort of person is so apt to suspect evil where no evil exists. Still, it was a relief to know that Rosalind Akbar would, of course, leave Allways Place immediately after the funeral.

He hurried off to his study, and the parish nurse stood up as he came in. Like everyone else in the village, she was on the best of

terms with him.

As he shook hands with her he murmured: "This is terribly sudden, Miss Somehow I can't believe it even now! I was with Mrs. Hardwyke while she had her tea this afternoon, and I thought her rather better than usual."

"Miss Akbar says that Mrs. Hardwyke began to feel ill about half-past six, and that from then she grew worse and worse. I'm sorry, Mr. Hardwyke, that I wasn't sent for before. I might have done something to alleviate her pain.'

"Had she pain?" he said, startled and

very sorry.
"Yes, I'm afraid she had a good deal of pain. But Miss Akbar gave her some morphia pills which Mrs. Hardwyke had had by her for a long time."

He said, bewildered: "But I don't under-

stand why she died."

"Her heart must have given way."

He caught at that. "The big London

man we had down some time ago told me her heart was not in good trim.

There was a pause, and then Hardwyke said, solicitously: "I do hope you've had some supper, Miss Dakin?'

It was that sort of thoughtfulness that made people like the man so much. He was kind to any woman that came across

his path.

She said, gratefully: "Yes, indeed, I've had some supper, Mr. Hardwyke-and a glass of your wonderful old port as well."

"That's right!" he exclaimed. "Have another glass now, before you go out into the cold?" And though she protested, he rang the bell. "I'm glad old England hasn't gone dry yet, eh?"

The parish nurse smiled, for the first

time that evening.

After he had ordered the wine from the butler, he turned to her again. "I suppose poor Miss Akbar is worn out, and that you sent her to bed?"

She looked rather surprised. "No, I don't think she's gone to bed, Mr. Hardwyke. I'm sure she meant to sit up to see you. She was in here just now, but when we heard the motor she left the room. wonder where she can be?"

And then he realized that the strange girl didn't mean to see him for the first time after his wife's death in the presence of another woman. But if slie thought he was going to choose such a moment as this to be sentimental she was mistaken; the idea was revolting—revolting!

He poured out a glass of port for the nurse, and then he took her to the front door and put her into his motor as carefully, as courteously, so she said to herself, as if she had been the first lady in the land.

Slowly, with lagging steps, he turned back into the house. "If Miss Akbar has not gone to bed, I should like to see her," he said to the butler; and then, as if by an afterthought: "Oh, and at the same time Miss Brown might come down."

Brown was his wife's maid, and his firm

"Miss Brown has gone to bed, sir. Miss Akbar is already in the study—I saw her go in there just now."

Then he had been right? She had been waiting for the other woman to go before

she saw him.

Straightening himself instinctively, he

opened the door of the study.

His wife's companion was standing by the fire, and her head was bent down, as if she were listening to something. She did not look up as he opened the door, and a sensation of irritation swept over Leonard Hardwyke. Why couldn't she be ordinary, natural? Alas, he knew well enough that

she was being absolutely herself; in fact, the thing about Rosalind Akbar that he had found unpleasantly disconcerting was that she was always, first and last, a child of nature.

She looked round at him, and he was horrified at the change in her face; it was entirely drained of colour; and suddenly he was ashamed of his unkind thoughts, for she had evidently gone through an awful ordeal.

"Sit down," he said, kindly, "sit down, Rosalind. I'm more sorry than I can say

that I was out to-night-

"It's the first time, Mr. Hardwyke, that I've ever seen anybody die, or even anybody dead," she muttered in a low, shaky voice.

And then, still speaking in tremulous tones, she added: "I thought she would just lie back and die quietly. But she had such awful pain till we found some old morphia pills. Brown didn't want to give them to her, but they acted very quickly and were such a comfort! Brown thinks that perhaps they hastened her death?" She looked round her timorously, as if afraid that the walls might hear.

"I don't think morphia acts in that way at all," he said, shortly. "And, if it did, who could wish anyone to linger on in agony? I have a horror of the modern way of prolonging life a few weeks, a few

days, even a few hours."

"So have I," she murmured, almost

inaudibly.

He could see her lips twitching, and felt concerned about her, while yet again irritated. After all, she hadn't cared for her employer; she had actually disliked her.

BUT women are queer creatures! Leonard Hardwyke had all room of the control of th Hardwyke had all your philanderer's instinctive contempt for the other sex, though at times an infinite indulgence for,

and understanding of, women.

He said abruptly: "I will, of course, sit up for Dr. Fenner. But you had better go The parish nurse has told me everyto bed.

"I don't see how she can have told you anything, for I didn't send for her till after-

He broke in impatiently: "I know that. But she told me enough to say everything

that is necessary to Dr. Fenner."

The thought of sitting up here with the girl -as he used sometimes to sit up with her after the servants had all gone to bed, in the dangerous, foolish days that now seemed so long ago-was intolerable, the more so that Dr. Fenner might not come to-night after

She got up, like an automaton, and again he was frightened by the ghastly look of her face. "It was terrible," she said, brokenly. "Her suffering, I mean. And yet how callous people are! Brown thought it quite natural, and even Miss Dakin, when I told her about it, didn't seem to mind very much."

He took her cold hand and chafed it.

"Now look here, my dear!" He forced her down into her chair again. "You must try and pull yourself together! I know you've had a very terrible experience, and I'm bitterly sorry that I went out to-night, and that you faced it alone. But you always did your duty by Mrs. Hardwyke, and I'm sure you thought of everything a kind heart could suggest your doing for her to-night, and----"

She interrupted him roughly. "How does it feel to be free?" she asked, looking

up into his face.

He winced, shocked at the atrocious taste

of the question.

"You've often told me yourself," she went on, breathlessly, "that you were bound-not free! Now you are free, Leonard Hardwyke—how does it feel to be free?"

He looked round him nervously. Supposing one of the servants happened to be listening at the door! What a horrid thing to have whispered about him—that he had said he felt bound, not free! And what a fool he had been to say it to his wife's companion-to this hysterical, malicious girl! Hardwyke had said that sort of thing to so many women, but this was the first time a woman had been so unkind as to taunt him with it.

"It was wrong of me to say that-very wrong, Miss Akbar''; he spoke rather louder than usual. "Every married man is in a sense bound. But though you may find it difficult to believe it, I had a very real, indeed a deep, affection for my poor wife."
"Had you?" She started up from the

chair where he had placed her. "Then, indeed, am I of all women the most miser-

able!"

"Don't talk like that," he said in a low voice—what to herself the unhappy girl called his "old" voice. "You are making

me very miserable, Rosalind."
"Mr. Hardwyke"—she took a step nearer to him and gazed into his face with so strange and despairing a look that for the first time in his long, selfish life he felt ashamed of having made love to a woman-ashamed, as well as bitterly sorry—"do you think your wife died a natural death?"

"Of course I do. She was always an invalid, and her heart was in a bad state. I suppose she must have eaten something to-day at lunch that disagreed with her. Acute pain followed, and her heart gave

way."

"You really believe that?" The girl looked at him fixedly.
"What else can I believe?"

He was puzzled by her manner. Was she trying to prolong their interview? Was she afraid of going off to bed? He hardly liked to suggest that she should take one of his poor wife's sleeping draughts, though that would be the wisest thing she could do.

Then there fell on his affrighted ears the words, uttered slowly and very distinctly: "I killed Mrs. Hardwyke. I gave her a large dose of antimony. No one else will ever know the truth, but I wish you to know at what a cost you have been made free.' Her voice rising almost into a scream, she went on, speaking more and more quickly: "It's all very well for you to pretend now that you weren't unhappy—that you were attached to your wife. I know better! I know that you were wretched. But don't be afraid—you'll never see me again after

-no one else will ever

know---"

He put his hands heavily on her shoulders. "I don't believe a word of what you've been saying. You can't frighten me, you silly little fool! How dare you tell such a wicked, silly, dangerous lie?"

"Very well-go on believing that she died a natural death! I don't care"—she cried, hysterically.

He let her go. "I —I don't know what to believe," he mut-tered, and it was the truth.

There came a curious look over her pallid face. "I'm not like you," she cried, passionately. "I haven't had an easy, sheltered life. I've had to think things out for myself,

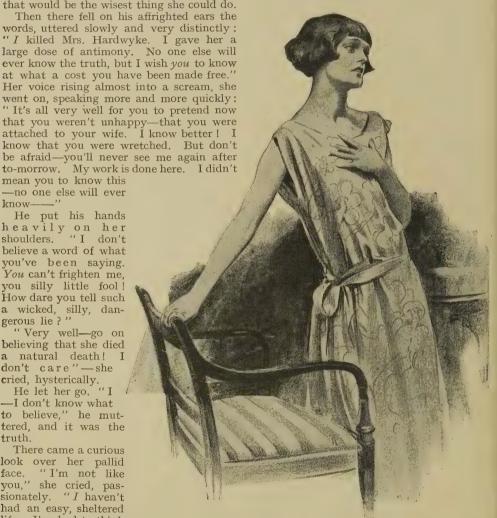
Mr. Hardwyke, and I'm not a bit sorry for what I've done! What upset me was seeing her suffer."

And then she repeated the curious phrase he had heard her utter—was it a few minutes, or hours ago? "I thought she would simply lie back and die. You told me yourself, during the short time you really loved me, that her heart might give way at any time-"

He was gazing at her with a feeling of growing horror and repulsion. This was surely a nightmare he was living through? But what an awful nightmare.

"I ask you to confess," he said, firmly, "that what you have just told me is not true. That you said it only-"

"-To pay you out for all the un-



"Mr. Hardwyke, do you think

happiness, the misery, the shame, you have caused me? Very well-have it

"The shame?" he repeated. "I don't know what you mean. We have nothing to be ashamed of-far from it.'

She said, violently: "So you think, no doubt. But I am ashamed—horribly, debasedly ashamed, of having loved such

a creature as you. However, as I said just now, I'm going away to-morrow—you'll never be troubled with me any more."

He put up a warning hand. His quick ears had caught the sound of a motor rushShe wrenched her hand away. "You can make Brown get up-if the doctor really wants to hear what went on this evening, she said in a hard voice, and then she left the room.

A few moments later the country dcctor was shown in, and the two men shook hands in silence.

"I'm more sorry than I can say that I was out," began Dr. Fenner. "That parish was out," began Dr. Fenner. That pansh nurse of ours is a good soul—she waited up till she heard me go by, and then she ran out and hailed me. So I've heard it all from her, and I fear, from what she says, that I could have done very

"I shall never forgive myself," said Leonard Hardwyke in a broken voice, "for having been out to-night. But I got a message from my poor wife saying that she

didn't feel very well, and urging me to accept Mrs. Langdon's invitation. They had a children's party over at Paringham, and I'm awfully fond of the kiddies, as you know, doctor."

The doctor's own children were among Leonard Hardwyke's warm friends and

grateful admirers. He went on: "I'll the coroner to-morrow, and try and get everything settled as soon as possible."

A feeling of icy fear suddenly clutched at Leonard Hardwyke's heart.

"The coroner?"

Dr. Fenner looked surprised. "I thought you realized that there'll have to be an inquest. Mrs. Hardwyke's dislike to members of my profession was unfortunate, in a way. If only I'd seen her within the last two or three weeks I could have signed the death certificate at once. But I haven't seen Mrs. Hardwyke since Armstrong came down from

London, and that's months ago."

"I suppose it is," said Hardwyke, mechani-"But there won't have to be a post-mortem, will there?"

"I'm afraid there will, Hardwyke."

The doctor looked uncomfortable. It is odd what a dislike even sensible people have to that simple affair.

He added: "Besides, I'm sure that for



your wife died a natural death?"

ing swiftly up the avenue. "There's Dr. Fenner!" he exclaimed.

He took her hand again. "I bitterly regret the suffering I have caused you. Still, you shouldn't have done what you did just now. It was a very cruel punishment for my having loved you. Come! Admit that it was!

But her face, now, was the face of a mask.

your own sake you'd like to know why Mrs. Hardwyke died?"

"I thought we did know," said the other

in a low voice.

"We don't know in the least what set up the violent internal inflammation. From what your wife's maid told the parish nurse, it does seem to me a little mysterious."

"They gave her some morphia pills," said Hardwyke, in an almost inaudible

voice.

He felt as if his teeth were chattering, and it was a most disturbing feeling. He was remembering how, one day in the harness-room, he had told Rosalind Akbar of a famous antimony poisoning case called the Bravo Mystery. It had been recalled to his mind because there, on a shelf of his harness-room, was a bottle of the perilous stuff, a survival of the days when horses' coats were treated with antimony to make them bright. Fool, fool, fool that he had been!

He came back to the awful present to hear the doctor say: "I'm glad of that; morphia was the very best thing they could have given her."

HILE these words were being uttered a thousand disconnected, questioning thoughts were rushing through Hardwyke's brain. Could he make an appeal here and now to Dr. Fenner? Would the promise of money—of a great deal of money—do any good? Reason answered "No," for Fenner was an honest man—far, far too honest. Then could nothing be done to stop what he now realized was going to happen? Again his clear, acute brain supplied the despairing answer—nothing.

"If you don't mind, I'll write to the coroner here. Then I'll drop it in his letter-box—it's only a minute out of my

way."

The doctor walked across to the fine old writing bureau, and Hardwyke, sitting down, stared into the fire. Then, suddenly, he experienced a most peculiar and terrible hallucination.

Against the ancient iron fire-back, emblazoned with the Allways coat of arms at which he was staring with unseeing eyes, there was gradually formed a luminous square, across which stretched a platform on which stood a group of men. Of these men he only recognized Colonel Knox, Governor of the county prison, though there was a clergyman there, and a man who was obviously a doctor. To their left stood two men in uniform—warders?—holding a queer-looking, trussed-up, blindfolded figure, who looked at once familiar and unfamiliar. Was it—could it be—himself? He stared on at the mirage-like vision; and, gradually,

he saw that behind that curious group of men there rose a square erection of beams, recalling to his mind the swing which had been his midsummer gift to Dr. Fenner's children.

Covering his face with his right hand, he shut his eyes, and when, at last, he looked

again, there was nothing there.

Agonized, incoherent, unconnected thoughts and questionings—answers to these questionings, sometimes consoling, sometimes fearsome—jostled one another in his excited brain. The one rock to which he clung was his belief in the law of his country. In England there is no such thing as a miscarriage of justice; and then he remembered the Beck case.

Even so, what an infinite comfort to know that he was an absolutely innocent man. But he forced himself to face the fact that appearances would be terribly—terribly, but surely not absolutely?—against him. His brain marshalled them silently all before him. Even his wife's recent will would provide a motive, coupled with his idiotic, crazy, while yet, yes, absolutely innocent, flirtation with Rosalind Akbar.

Who among all the men he now called friends, who among the women with whom he had had tender passages, would believe him innocent? Not one? Not one.

Even if Rosalind Akbar confessed the truth, who would believe that she was telling the whole truth? All he could hope for and fight for was the horrible thing called "the benefit of the doubt." That would leave him life, but very little else that such a man as himself valued. He had always been dependent—foolishly, extravagantly so-on the good opinion of his fellows. Henceforth, if the best that could befall him came to pass, he would be an Ishmael, a moral leper. Nowhere could he go in the English - speaking, English - reading, world without being pointed at as the man who, though he had escaped punishment—escaped punishment, good God !-had been tried for murder, and was probably guilty.

There came over him an intense feeling of pity for himself. His eyes began to smart with unshed tears. He told himself that he had done nothing to deserve the horrible thing that was relentlessly coming on him, and that he was a much better man, morally, than many of the men with whom life had brought him in contact. Yet they were free, while he was trapped, as a result of

having merely—philandered.

He groaned, and the doctor, startled,

turned sharply round in his chair.

Hardwyke was standing in the middle of the room. His face was twitching, his hands



"Fenner, I-I want to ask you something in confidence."

were, as if unconsciously, clasping and unclasping one another. And then, as he caught the other's look of amazement, he forced himself to smile—and it was a horrible smile.

"Fenner, I—I want to ask you something in confidence."

"Yes, Hardwyke?"

The doctor's voice was very cold.

"Is there anything in common between morphia and antimony?"

He tried to say the words lightly, but as soon as they had left his twitching lips he knew that he had failed.

"Good God—no—man!"

And then Dr. Fenner asked, in a low,

strained voice: "Is there any antimony in this house?"

"Yes—no—there may be, in the harness-room."

The doctor got up and took a step forward. He laid his hand heavily on the other's shoulder. "I'd no right to ask you that question, Hardwyke. I'll forget your answer. But remember that anything you say from now on—may be used in evidence against you."

That same night Rosalind Akbar shot herself, and on the third of January Leonard Hardwyke was arrested on the charge of having murdered his wife.



P.G.WODEHOUSE

A. WALLIS MILLS

HE summer afternoon was warm and heavy. Butterflies loafed languidly in the sunshine, birds panted in the shady recesses of the trees. With the exception of an occasional perspiring bee that buzzed past intent on some mysterious duty, the only creatures exhibiting any activity were the members of a four-ball foursome working its way up the hill from the eighth tee. The Oldest Member of the club, snug in his favourite chair on the terrace overlooking the ninth green, had long since succumbed to the drowsy influence of the weather. His eyes were closed, his chin sunk upon his breast. The pipe which he had been smoking lay beside him on the turf, and ever and anon there proceeded from him a muffled snore. Two young men, wandering towards the tennis-courts, stepped lightly as they passed him. This was partly because they thought the nap would be good for their venerable friend; partly because it was his habit, when awake, to buttonhole the nearest person and relate to him one of the innumerable reminiscences of his golfing past. The Oldest Member, though he had not played since the days of the gutty ball, still kept in touch with the game through the medium of speech.

Suddenly the stillness was broken. There was a sharp, cracking sound as of splitting wood. It rang out like the report of a rifle, and the Oldest Member sat up, blinking. As soon as his eyes had become accustomed to the glare, he perceived that the foursome had holed out on the ninth and was disin-Two of the players were moving tegrating. with quick, purposeful steps in the direction of the side door which gave entrance to the

bar; a third was making for the road that led to the village, bearing himself as one in profound dejection; the fourth came on to the terrace.

"Finished?" said the Oldest Member,

accosting this individual.

The other stopped, wiping a heated brow. He lowered himself into the adjoining chair and stretched his legs out.

"Yes. We started at the tenth. Golly, I'm tired. No joke playing in this weather."

"How did you come out?"

"We won on the last green. Jimmy Fothergill and I were playing the vicar and Rupert Blake."

What was that sharp, cracking sound I

heard?" asked the Oldest Member.
His companion laughed, the care-free laugh of the man to whom the gods of golf

have granted a happy ending.

"That was the vicar smashing his putter. He had a two-foot putt to halve the hole and match, and he missed it. Poor old chap, he had rotten luck all the way round, and it didn't seem to make it any better for him that he wasn't able to relieve his feelings in the ordinary way. Golly, I'm tired," he said once more, and, wriggling himself into a more comfortable position, he closed his eves.

"I suspected some such thing," said the Oldest Member, "from the look of his back as he was leaving the green. His walk was

the walk of an overwrought soul."

His companion did not reply. He was

breathing deeply and regularly.

"It is a moot question," proceeded the Oldest Member, thoughtfully, "whether the clergy, considering their peculiar position, should not be more liberally handicapped at

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golf than the laymen with whom they compete. I have made a close study of the game since the days of the feather ball, and am firmly convinced that to refrain entirely from oaths during a round is almost equivalent to giving away three bisques. There are certain occasions when an oath seems to be so imperatively demanded that the strain of keeping it in must inevitably affect the ganglions or nerve-centres in such a manner as to diminish the steadiness of the swing."

The man beside him slipped lower down in his chair. His mouth had opened-slightly.

"I am reminded in this connection," the Oldest Member, "of the story of young Chester Meredith, a friend of mine whom you have not, I think, met. He moved from this neighbourhood shortly before you came. There was a case where a man's whole happiness was very nearly wrecked purely because he tried to curb his instincts and thwart nature in this very respect. Perhaps you would care to hear the story?

A snore proceeded from the next chair. "Very well, then," said the Oldest Member, "I will relate it."

THESTER MEREDITH (said the Oldest Member) was one of the nicest young fellows of my acquaintance. We had been friends ever since he had come to live here as a small boy, and I had watched him with a fatherly eye through all the more important crises of a young man's life. It was I who taught him to drive, and when he had all that trouble in his twenty-first year with shanking his short approaches, it was to me that he came for sympathy and advice. It was an odd coincidence, therefore, that I should have been present when he fell in love.

I was smoking my evening cigar out here and watching the last couples finishing their rounds, when Chester came out of the clubhouse and sat by me. I could see that the boy was perturbed about something, and wondered why, for I knew that he had won his match.

"What," I inquired, "is on your mind?" "Oh, nothing," said Chester. "I was only thinking that there are some human misfits who ought not to be allowed on any decent links."

"You mean—?"

"The Wrecking Crew," said Chester, bitterly. "They held us up all the way round, confound them. Wouldn't let us through. What can you do with people who don't know enough of the etiquette of the game to understand that a single has right of way over a four-ball foursome? We had to loaf about for hours on end while they scratched at the turf like a lot of

crimson hens. Eventually all four of them lost their balls simultaneously at the eleventh and we managed to get by. I hope they choke."

I was not altogether surprised at his warmth. This Wrecking Crew consisted of four retired business men who had taken up the noble game late in life because their doctors had ordered them air and exercise. Every club, I suppose, has a cross of this kind to bear, and it was not often that our members rebelled; but there was undoubtedly something particularly irritating in the methods of the Wrecking Crew. They tried so hard that it seemed almost inconceivable that they should be so slow.

"They are all respectable men," I said, "and were, I believe, highly thought of in their respective businesses. But on the links I admit that they are a trial."

"They are the direct lineal descendants of the Gadarene swine," said Chester, firmly. "Every time they come out I expect to see them rush down the hill from the first tee and hurl themselves into the lake at the second. Of all the——'
"Hush!" I said.

Out of the corner of my eye I had seen a girl approaching, and I was afraid lest Chester in his annoyance might use strong language. For he was one of those golfers who are apt to express themselves in moments of emotion with a good deal of generous warmth.
"Eh?" said Chester.

I jerked my head, and he looked round. And, as he did so, there came into his face an expression which I had seen there only once before, on the occasion when he won the President's Cup on the last green by holing a thirty-yard chip with his mashie. It was a look of ecstasy and awe. His mouth was open, his eyebrows raised, and he was breathing heavily through his nose.

"Golly!" I heard him mutter. The girl passed by. I could not blame Chester for staring at her. She was a beau-tiful young thing, with a lissom figure and a perfect face. Her hair was a deep chestnut, her eyes blue, her nose small and laid back with about as much loft as a light iron. She disappeared, and Chester, after nearly dislocating his neck trying to see her round the corner of the club-house, emitted a deep, explosive sigh.
"Who is she?" he whispered.

I could tell him that. In one way and another I get to know most things around this locality.

"She is a Miss Blakeney. Felicia Blakeney. She has come to stay for a month with the Waterfields. I understand she was at school with Jane Waterfield. She is twenty-three, has a dog named Joseph, dances well, and dislikes parsnips. Her father is a distinguished writer on sociological subjects; her mother is Wilmot Royce, the well-known novelist, whose last work, 'Sewers of the Soul,' was, you may recall, jerked before a tribunal by the Purity League. She has a brother, Crispin Blakeney, an eminent young reviewer and essayist, who is now in India studying local conditions with a view to a series of lectures. She only arrived here yesterday, so this is all I have been able to find out about her as yet."

Chester's mouth was still open when I began speaking. By the time I had finished it was open still wider. The ecstatic look in his eyes had changed to one of dull

despair. "My God!" he muttered. family is like that, what chance is there for a roughneck like me?"

"You admire her?"

"She is the alligator's Adam's apple," said Chester, simply.

I patted his shoulder.

"Have courage, my boy," I said. "Always remember that the love of a good man to whom the pro. can only give a couple of strokes in eighteen holes is not to be despised."

'Yes, that's all very well. But this girl is probably one solid mass of brain. She will look on me as an uneducated wart-

hog."
"Well, I will introduce you, and we will see. She looked a nice girl."

"You're a great describer, aren't you?" said Chester. "A wonderful flow of language you've got, I don't think! Nice girl! Why, she's the only girl in the world. She's a pearl among women. She's the most marvellous, astounding, beautiful, heavenly thing that ever drew perfumed breath." He paused, as if his train of thought had been interrupted by an idea. "Did you say that her brother's name was Crispin?"

"I did. Why?"

Chester gave vent to a few manly oaths. "Doesn't that just show you how things go in this rotten world?"

"What do you mean?"

"I was at school with him."

"Surely that should form a solid basis

for friendship?"

"Should it? Should it, by gad? Well, let me tell you that I probably kicked that blighted worm Crispin Blakeney a matter of seven hundred and forty-six times in the few years I knew him. He was the world's worst. He could have walked straight into the Wrecking Crew and no questions asked. Wouldn't it jar you? I have the luck to know her brother, and it turns out that we couldn't stand the sight of each other."

"Well, there is no need to tell her that."

"Do you mean——?" He gazed at me wildly. "Do you mean I might pretend we were pals?"

"Why not? Seeing that he is in India,

he can hardly contradict you."
"My gosh!" He mused for a moment. I could see that the idea was beginning to sink in. It was always thus with Chester. You had to give him time. "By Jove, it mightn't be a bad scheme at that. I mean, it would start me off with a rush, like being one up on bogey in the first two. And there's nothing like a good start. By gad, I'll

"I should."

"Reminiscences of the dear old days when we were lads together, and all that sort of thing."
"Precisely."

"It isn't going to be easy, mind you," said Chester, meditatively. "I'll do it because I love her, but nothing else in this world would make me say a civil word about the blister. Well, then, that's settled. Get on with the introduction stuff, will you? I'm in a hurry."

NE of the privileges of age is that it enables a man to thrust his society on a beautiful girl without causing her to draw herself up and say "Sir! It was not difficult for me to make the acquaintance of Miss Blakeney, and, this done, my first act was to unleash Chester on her.

"Chester," I said, summoning him as he loafed with an overdone carelessness on the horizon, one leg almost inextricably entwined about the other, "I want you to meet Miss Blakeney. Miss Blakeney, this is my young friend Chester Meredith. He was at school with your brother Crispin. You were great friends, were you not?"

"Bosom," said Chester, after a pause.
"Oh, really?" said the girl. There was a pause. "He is in India now."
"Yes," said Chester.

There was another pause.

"Great chap," said Chester, gruffly.
"Crispin is very popular," said the girl,
"with some people."

"Always been my best pal," said Chester.

" Yes?"

I was not altogether satisfied with the way matters were developing. The girl seemed cold and unfriendly, and I was afraid that this was due to Chester's repellent manner. Shyness, especially when complicated by love at first sight, is apt to have strange effects on a man, and the way it had taken Chester was to make him abnormally stiff and dignified. One of the most charming things about him was his delightful boyish smile. Shyness had caused him to iron this out of his countenance till no trace of it remained. Not only did he not smile, he looked like a man who never had smiled and never would. His mouth was a thin, rigid line. His back was stiff with what appeared to be contemptuous aversion. He looked down his nose at Miss Blakeney as if she were less than the dust beneath his chariotwheels.

I thought the best thing to do was to leave them alone together to get acquainted. Perhaps, I thought, it was my presence that was cramping Chester's style. I excused myself and receded.

T was some days before I saw Chester again. He came round to my cottage one night after dinner and sank into a chair, where he remained silent for several minutes.

Chester came out of his trance.

"Love her?" he cried, his voice vibrating with emotion. "Of course I love her. Who wouldn't love her? I'd be a silly chump not loving her. Do you know," the boy went on, a look in his eyes like that of some young knight seeing the Holy Grail in a vision, "do you know, she is the only woman I ever met who didn't overswing. Just a nice, crisp, snappy half-slosh, with a good full follow-through. And another thing. You'll hardly believe me, but she waggled almost as little as George Duncan. You know how women waggle as a rule, fiddling about for a minute and a half like kittens playing with a ball of wool. Well, she just makes one firm pass with the club and then bing! There is none like her, none."

"Then you have been playing golf with

her ? "

"Nearly every day." "How is your game?"

"Rather spotty. I seem to be mistiming

I was concerned.

"I do hope, my dear boy," I said, earnestly, "that you are taking care to control your feelings when out on the links



doctors had ordered them air and exercise.

"Well?" I said at last.

"Eh?" said Chester, starting violently.

"Have you been seeing anything of Miss Blakeney lately?"

"You bet I have."
"And how do you feel about her on further acquaintance?"

"Eh?" said Chester, absently.

"Do you still love her?"

with Miss Blakeney. You know what you are like. I trust you have not been using the sort of language you generally employ on occasions when you are not timing them right?"

"Me?" said Chester, horrified. "Who, me? You don't imagine for a moment that I would dream of saying a thing that would bring a blush to her dear cheek, do you? Why, a bishop could have gone round with me and learned nothing new."

I was relieved.

"How do you find you manage the dialogue these days?" I asked. "When I introduced you, you behaved—you will forgive an old friend for criticizing—you behaved a little like a stuffed frog with laryngitis. Have things got easier in that respect?"

Oh, yes. I'm quite the prattler now. I talk about her brother mostly. I put in the greater part of my time boosting the tick. It seems to be coming easier. Will-power, I suppose. And then, of course, I talk a good deal about her mother's novels."

"Have you read them?"

"Every damned one of them—for her sake. And if there's a greater proof of love than that, show me! My gosh, what muck that woman writes! That reminds me, I've got to send to the bookshop for her latest—out yesterday. It's called 'The Stench of Life.' A sequel, I understand, to 'Grey Mildew.'"

"Brave lad," I said, pressing his hand.

"Brave, devoted lad!"

"Oh, I'd do more than that for her." He smoked for awhile in silence. "By the way, I'm going to propose to her to-morrow."

" Already?"

"Can't put it off a minute longer. It's been as much as I could manage, bottling it up till now. Where do you think would be the best place? I mean, it's not the sort of thing you can do while you're walking down the street or having a cup of tea. I thought of asking her to have a round with me and taking a stab at it on the links."

"You could not do better. The links-

Nature's cathedral."

"Right-o, then! I'll let you know how I come out."

"I wish you luck, my boy," I said.

ND what of Felicia, meanwhile? was, alas, far from returning the devotion which scorched Chester's vital organs. He seemed to her precisely the sort of man she most disliked. From childhood up Felicia Blakeney had lived in an atmosphere of highbrowism, and the type of husband she had always seen in her daydreams was the man who was simple and straightforward and earthy and did not know whether Artbashiekeff was a suburb of Moscow or a new kind of Russian drink. A man like Chester, who on his own statement would rather read one of her mother's novels than eat, revolted her. And his warm affection for her brother Crispin set the seal on her distaste.

Felicia was a dutiful child, and she loved her parents. It took a bit of doing, but she did it. But at her brother Crispin she drew the line. He wouldn't do, and his friends were worse than he was. They were high-voiced, supercilious, pince-nezed young men who talked patronizingly of Life and Art, and Chester's unblushing confession that he was one of them had put him ten down and nine to play right away.

You may wonder why the boy's undeniable skill on the links had no power to soften the girl. The unfortunate fact was that all the good effects of his prowess were neutralized by his behaviour while playing. All her life she had treated golf with a proper reverence and awe, and in Chester's attitude towards the game she seemed to detect a horrible shallowness. The fact is, Chester, in his efforts to keep himself from using strong language, had found a sort of relief in a girlish giggle, and it made her shudder

every time she heard it.

His deportment, therefore, in the space of time leading up to the proposal could not have been more injurious to his cause. They started out quite happily, Chester doing a nice two-hundred-yarder off the first tee, which for a moment awoke the girl's respect. But at the fourth, after a lovely brassie-shot, he found his ball deeply embedded in the print of a woman's high heel. It was just one of those rubs of the green which normally would have caused him to ease his bosom with a flood of sturdy protest, but now he was on his guard.

"Tee-hee!" simpered Chester, reaching for his niblick. "Too bad, too bad!" and the girl shuddered to the depths of her soul.

Having holed out, he proceeded to enliven the walk to the next tee with a few remarks on her mother's literary style, and it was while they were walking after their drives

that he proposed.

His proposal, considering the circumstances, could hardly have been less happily worded. Little knowing that he was rushing upon his doom, Chester stressed the Crispin note. He gave Felicia the impression that he was suggesting this marriage more for Crispin's sake than anything else. He conveyed the idea that he thought how nice it would be for brother Crispin to have his old chum in the family. He drew a picture of their little home, with Crispin for ever popping in and out like a rabbit. is not to be wondered at that, when at length he had finished and she had time to speak, the horrified girl turned him down with a thud.

It is at moments such as these that a man reaps the reward of a good upbringing. In similar circumstances those who have not had the benefit of a sound training in golf are too apt to go wrong. Goaded by the sudden anguish, they take to drink, plunge into dissipation, and write vers libre. Chester was mercifully saved from this. I saw him the day after he had been handed the mitten, and was struck by the look of grim determination in his face. Deeply wounded though he was, I could see that he was the master of his fate and the captain of his soul.

"I am sorry, my boy," I said, sympathetically, when he had told me the painful news.

"It can't be helped," he replied, bravely.

"Her decision was final?"

" Quite."

"You do not contemplate having another pop at her?"

"No good. I know when I'm licked."
I patted him on the shoulder and said
the only thing it seemed possible to say.

"After all, there is always golf."
He nodded.

"Yes. My game needs a lot of tuning up. Now is the time to do it. From now on I go at this pastime seriously. I make it my life-work. Who knows?" he murmured, with a sudden gleam in his eyes. "The Amateur Championship——"

"The Open!" I cried, falling gladly into

his mood.

"The American Amateur," said Chester, flushing.

"The American Open," I chorused.

"No one has ever copped all four."

" No one."

"Watch me!" said Chester Meredith, simply.

I T was about two weeks after this that I happened to look in on Chester at his house one morning. I found him about to start for the links. As he had foreshadowed



He found his ball deeply embedded in the print of a woman's high heel.

in the conversation which I have just related, he now spent most of the daylight hours on the course. In these two weeks he had gone about his task of achieving perfection with a furious energy which made him the talk of the club. Always one of the best players in the place, he had developed an astounding brilliance. Men who had played him level were now obliged to receive two and even three strokes. The pro. himself, conceding one, had only succeeded in halving their match. The struggle for the President's Cup came round once more, and Chester won it for the second time with ridiculous ease.

When I arrived, he was practising chipshots in his sitting-room. I noticed that he seemed to be labouring under some strong emotion, and his first words gave me the clue.

"She's going away to-morrow," he said, abruptly, lofting a ball over the whatnot on to the Chesterfield.

I was not sure whether I was sorry or relieved. Her absence would leave a terrible

blank, of course, but it might be that it would help him to get over his infatua-

"Ah!" I said, non-committally.

Chester addressed his ball with a wellassumed phlegm, but I could see by the way his ears wiggled that he was feeling deeply. I was not surprised when he topped his shot into the coal-scuttle.

"She has promised to play a last round

with me this morning," he said.

Again I was doubtful what view to take. It was a pretty, poetic idea, not unlike Browning's "Last Ride Together," but I was not sure if it was altogether wise. However, it was none of my business, so I merely patted him on the shoulder and he gathered up his clubs and went off.

WING to motives of delicacy I had not offered to accompany him on his round, and it was not till later that I learned the actual details of what occurred. At the start, it seems, the spiritual anguish which he was suffering had a depressing effect on his game. He hooked his drive off the first tee and was only enabled to get a five by means of a strong niblick shot out of the rough. At the second, the lake hole, he lost a ball in the water and got another five. It was only at the third that he began to pull himself together.

The test of a great golfer is his ability to recover from a bad start. Chester had this quality to a pre-eminent degree. A lesser man, conscious of being three over bogey for the first two holes, might have looked on his round as ruined. To Chester it simply meant that he had to get a couple of "birdies" right speedily, and he set about it at once. Always a long driver, he excelled himself at the third. It is, as you know, an uphill hole all the way, but his drive could not have come far short of two hundred and fifty yards. A brassie-shot of equal strength and unerring direction put him on the edge of the green, and he holed out with a long putt two under bogey. He had hoped for a "birdie" and he had achieved an "eagle."

I think that this splendid feat must have softened Felicia's heart, had it not been for the fact that misery had by this time entirely Chester of the ability to smile. Instead, therefore, of behaving in the wholesome, natural way of men who get threes at bogey five holes, he preserved a drawn, impassive countenance; and as she watched him tee up her ball, stiff, correct, polite, but to all outward appearance absolutely inhuman, the girl found herself stifling that thrill of what for a moment had been almost adoration. It was, she felt, exactly how her brother Crispin would have comported himself if he had done a hole in two under bogey.

And yet she could not altogether check a wistful sigh when, after a couple of fours at the next two holes, he picked up another stroke on the sixth and with an inspired spoon-shot brought his medal-score down to one better than bogey by getting a two at the hundred-and-seventy-yard seventh. But the brief spasm of tenderness passed, and when he finished the first nine with two more fours she refrained from anything warmer than a mere word of stereotyped congratulation.

"One under bogey for the first nine," she

said. "Splendid!

"One under bogey!" said Chester, woodenly.

"Out in thirty-four. What is the record for the course?"

Chester started. So great had been his preoccupation that he had not given a thought to the course record. He suddenly realized now that the pro., who had done the lowest medal-score to date—the other course record was held by Peter Willard with a hundred and sixty-one, achieved in his first season-had gone out in only one better than his own figures that

day. "Sixty-eight," he said.

"What a pity you lost those strokes at the beginning!"

"Yes," said Chester.

He spoke absently-and, as it seemed to her, primly and without enthusiasm—for the flaming idea of having a go at the course record had only just occurred to him. Once before he had done the first nine in thirtyfour, but on that occasion he had not felt that curious feeling of irresistible force which comes to a golfer at the very top of his Then he had been aware all the time that he had been putting chancily. They had gone in, yes, but he had uttered a prayer per putt. To-day he was superior to any weak doubtings. When he tapped the ball on the green, he knew it was going The course record? Why not? to sink. What a last offering to lay at her feet! She would go away, out of his life for ever; she would marry some other bird; but the memory of that supreme round would remain with her as long as she breathed. When he won the Open and Amateur for the second—the third—the fourth time, she would say to herself, "I was with him when he dented the record for his home course!" And he had only to pick up a couple of strokes on the last nine, to do threes at holes where he was wont to be satisfied with fours. Yes, by Vardon, he would take a whirl at it.



70U, who are acquainted with these links. will no doubt say that the task which Chester Meredith had sketched out for himself—cutting two strokes off thirty-five for the second nine-was one at which Humanity might well shudder. The pro. himself, who had finished sixth in the last Open Championship, had never done better than a thirty-five, playing perfect golf and being one under bogey. But such was Chester's mood that, as he teed up on the tenth, he did not even consider the possibility of Every muscle in his body was working in perfect co-ordination with its fellows, his wrists felt as if they were made of tempered steel, and his eyes had just that hawk-like quality which enables a man to judge his short approaches to the inch. He swung forcefully, and the ball sailed so close to the direction-post that for a moment it seemed as if it had hit it.

"Oo!" cried Felicia.

Chester did not speak. He was following the flight of the ball. It sailed over the brow of the hill, and with his knowledge of the course he could tell almost the exact patch of turf on which it must have come An iron would do the business from there, and a single putt would give him the first of the "birdies" he required. Two minutes later he had holed out a sixfoot putt for a three. "Oo!" said Felicia again.

Chester walked to the eleventh tee in silence.

"No, never mind," she said, as he stooped to put her ball on the sand. "I don't think I'll play any more. I'd much rather just watch you.'

"Oh, that you could watch me through life!" said Chester, but he said it to himself. His actual words were "Very well!" and he spoke them with a stiff coldness

which chilled the girl.

The eleventh is one of the trickiest holes on the course, as no doubt you have found out for yourself. It looks absurdly simple, but that little patch of wood on the right that seems so harmless is placed just in the deadliest position to catch even the most slightly sliced drive. Chester's lacked the austere precision of his last. A hundred yards from the tee it swerved almost imperceptibly, and, striking a branch, fell in the tangled undergrowth. It took him two strokes to hack it out and put it on the green, and then his long putt, after quivering on the edge of the hole, stayed there. For a swift instant red-hot words rose to his lips, but he caught them just as they were coming out and crushed them back. He looked at his ball and he looked at the hole.

"Tut!" said Chester.

Felicia uttered a deep sigh. That niblick-shot out of the rough had impressed her profoundly. If only, she felt, this superb

golfer had been more human! Already, after watching him play the last nine holes, she had picked up more pointers about the game than the pro. of her home club had been able to teach her in six months. If only she were able to be constantly in this man's society, to see exactly what it was that he did with his left wrist that gave that terrific snap to his drives, she might acquire the knack herself one of these days. For she was a clear-thinking, honest girl, and thoroughly realized that she did not get the distance she ought to with her wood. With a husband like Chester beside her to stimulate and advise, of what might she not be capable? If she got wrong in her stance, he could put her right with a word. If she had a bout of slicing, how quickly he would tell her what caused it. And she knew that she had only to speak a word to wipe out the effects of her refusal, to bring him to her side for ever.

But could a girl pay such a price? When he had got that "eagle" on the third, he had looked bored. When he had missed this last putt, he had not seemed to care. "Tut!" What a word to use at such a moment! No, she felt sadly, it could not be done: To marry Chester Meredith, she told herself, would be like marrying a composite of Soames Forsyte, Sir Willoughby Patterne, and all her brother Crispin's friends. She sighed and was silent.

CHESTER, standing on the twelfth tee, reviewed the situation swiftly, like a general before a battle. There were seven holes to play, and he had to do these in two better than bogey. The one that faced him now offered few opportunities. It was a long, slogging, dog-leg hole, and even Ray and Taylor, when they had played their exhibition game on the course, had taken fives. No opening there.

The thirteenth—up a steep hill with a long iron-shot for one's second and a blind green fringed with bunkers? Scarcely practicable to hope for better than a four. The fourteenth—into the valley with the ground sloping sharply down to the ravine? He had once done it in three, but it had been a fluke. No; on these three holes he must be content to play for a steady bogey and trust to picking up a stroke on the fifteenth.

The fifteenth, straightforward up to the plateau green with its circle of bunkers, presents few difficulties to the finished golfer who is on his game. A bunker meant nothing to Chester in his present conquering vein. His mashie-shot second soared almost contemptuously over the chasm and rolled to within a foot of the pin. He came to

the sixteenth with the clear-cut problem before him of snipping two strokes off bogey on the last three holes.

To the unthinking man, not acquainted with the lay-out of our links, this would no doubt appear a tremendous feat. But the fact is, the Green Committee, with perhaps an unduly sentimental bias towards the happy ending, have arranged a comparatively easy finish to the course. The sixteenth is a perfectly plain hole with broad fairway and a down-hill run; the seventeenth, a one-shot affair with no difficulties for the man who keeps them straight; and the eighteenth, though its up-hill run makes it deceptive to the stranger and leads the unwary to take a mashie instead of a light iron for his second, has no real venom in it. Even Peter Willard has occasionally come home in a canter with a six, five, and seven, conceding himself only two eight-foot putts. It is, I think, this mild conclusion to a tough course that makes the refreshment-room of our club so noticeable for its sea of happy faces. The bar every day is crowded with rejoicing men who, forgetting the agonies of the first fifteen, are babbling of what they did on the last three. The seventeenth, with its possibilities of holing out a topped second, is particularly soothing.

Chester Meredith was not the man to top his second on any hole, so this supreme bliss did not come his way; but he laid a beautiful mashie-shot dead and got a three; and when with his iron he put his first well on the green at the seventeenth and holed out for a two, life, for all his broken heart, seemed pretty tolerable. He now had the situation well in hand. He had only to play his usual game to get a four on the last and lower the course record by one stroke.

It was at this supreme moment of his life that he ran into the Wrecking Crew.

You doubtless find it difficult to understand how it came about that if the Wrecking Crew were on the course at all he had not run into them long before. The explanation is that, with a regard for the etiquette of the game unusual in these miserable men, they had for once obeyed the law that enacts that foursomes shall start at the tenth. They had begun their dark work on the second nine, accordingly, at almost the exact moment when Chester Meredith was driving off at the first, and this had enabled them to keep ahead until When Chester came to the eighteenth tee, they were just leaving it, moving up the fairway with their caddies in mass formation and looking to his exasperated eye like one of those great race-migrations of the Middle Ages. Wherever Chester looked he seemed to see human, so to speak, figures. One was doddering about in the long grass fifty yards from the tee, others debouched to left and right. The course

was crawling with them.

Chester sat down on the bench with a weary sigh. He knew these men. Self-centred, remorseless, deaf to all the promptings of their better nature, they never let anyone through. There was nothing to do but wait.

The Wrecking Crew scratched on. The man near the tee rolled his ball ten yards, then twenty, then thirty—he was improving. Ere long he would be out of range. Chester rose and swished his driver.

But the end was not yet. The individual operating in the rough on the left had been advancing in slow stages, and now, finding his ball teed up on a tuft of grass, he opened his shoulders and let himself go. was a loud report, and the ball, hitting a tree squarely, bounded back almost to the tee, and all the weary work was to do again. By the time Chester was able to drive, he was reduced by impatience, and the necessity of refraining from commenting on the state of affairs as he would have wished to comment, to a frame of mind in which no man could have kept himself from pressing. He pressed, and topped. The ball skidded over the turf for a meagre hundred yards.

"D-d-d-dear me!" said Chester.

The next moment he uttered a bitter laugh. Too late a miracle had happened. One of the foul figures in front was waving its club. Other ghastly creatures were withdrawing to the side of the fairway. Now, when the harm had been done, these outcasts were signalling to him to go through. hollow mockery of the thing swept over Chester like a wave. What was the use of going through now? He was a good three hundred yards from the green, and he needed bogey at this hole to break the record. Almost absently he drew his brassie from his bag; then, as the full sense of his wrongs bit into his soul, he swung viciously.

Golf is a strange game. Chester had pressed on the tee and foozled. He pressed now, and achieved the most perfect shot of his life. The ball shot from its place as if a charge of powerful explosive were behind it. Never deviating from a straight line, never more than six feet from the ground, it sailed up the hill, crossed the bunker, eluded the mounds beyond, struck the turf, rolled, and stopped fifty feet from the hole. It was the brassie-shot of a lifetime, and shrill senile yippings of excitement and congratulation floated down from the Wrecking Crew. For, degraded though they were, these men were not wholly devoid of human instincts.

Chester drew a deep breath. His ordeal was over. That third shot, which would

lay the ball right up to the pin, was precisely the sort of thing he did best. Almost from boyhood he had been a wizard at the short approach. He could hole out in two now on his left ear. He strode up the hill to his ball. It could not have been lying better. Two inches away there was a nasty cup in the turf; but it had avoided this and was sitting nicely perched up, smiling an invitation to the mashie-niblick. Chester shuffled his feet and eyed the flag keenly. Then he stooped to play, and Felicia watched him Her whole being seemed to breathlessly. be concentrated on him. She had forgotten everything save that she was seeing a course record get broken. She could not have been more wrapped up in his success if she had had large sums of money on it.

THE Wrecking Crew, meanwhile, had come to life again. They had stopped twittering about Chester's brassie-shot and were thinking of resuming their own game. Even in foursomes where fifty vards is reckoned a good shot somebody must be away, and the man whose turn it was to play was the one who had acquired from his brother-members of the club the nickname

of the First Grave-Digger.

A word about the human wen. He was if there can be said to be grades in such a sub-species—the star performer of the Wrecking Crew. The lunches of fiftyseven years had caused his chest to slip down into the mezzanine floor, but he was still a powerful man, and had in his youth been a hammer-thrower of some repute. He differed from his colleagues—the Man With the Hoe, Old Father Time, and Consul, the Almost Human-in that, while they were content to peck cautiously at the ball, he never spared himself in his efforts to do it a violent injury. Frequently he had cut a blue dot almost in half with his niblick. He was completely muscle-bound, so that he seldom achieved anything beyond a series of chasms in the turf, but he was always trying, and it was his secret belief that, given two or three miracles happening simultaneously, he would one of these days bring off a snifter. Years of disappointment had, however, reduced the flood of hope to a mere trickle, and when he took his brassie now and addressed the ball he had no immediate plans beyond a vague intention of rolling the thing a few yards farther up the hill.

The fact that he had no business to play at all till Chester had holed out did not occur to him; and even if it had occurred he would have dismissed the objection as Chester, bending over his ball, was nearly two hundred yards away—or the distance of three full brassie-shots. The First Grave-Digger did not hesitate. He whirled up his club as in distant days he had been wont to swing the hammer, and, with the grunt which this performance always wrung from him, brought it down.

Golfers—and I stretch this term to include the Wrecking Crew—are a highly imitative The spectacle of a flubber flubbing ahead of us on the fairway inclines to make us flub as well; and, conversely, it is immediately after we have seen a magnificent shot that we are apt to eclipse ourselves. Consciously the Grave-Digger had no notion how Chester had made that superb brassiebiff of his, but all the while I suppose his subconscious self had been taking notes. any rate, on this one occasion he, too, did the shot of a lifetime. As he opened his eyes, which he always shut tightly at the moment of impact, and started to unravel himself from the complicated tangle in which his follow-through had left him, he perceived the ball breasting the hill like some untamed jack-rabbit of the Californian prairie.

For a moment his only emotion was one of dreamlike amazement. He stood looking at the ball with a wholly impersonal wonder, like a man suddenly confronted with some terrific work of Nature. Then, as a sleepwalker awakens, he came to himself with a start. Directly in front of the flying pilule was a man bending to make an approach-shot

Chester, always a concentrated golfer when there was man's work to do, had scarcely heard the crack of the brassie behind him. Certainly he had paid no attention to it. His whole mind was fixed on his stroke. He measured with his eye the distance to the pin, noted the downslope of the green, and shifted his stance a little to allow for it. Then, with a final swift waggle, he laid his club-head behind the ball and slowly raised it. It was just coming down when the world became full of shouts of "Fore!" and something hard smote him violently on the seat of his plusfours.

THE supreme tragedies of life leave us momentarily stunned. For an instant which seemed an age Chester could not understand what had happened. True, he realized that there had been an earthquake, a cloud-burst, and a railway accident, and that a high building had fallen on him at the exact moment when somebody had shot him with a gun, but these happenings would account for only a small part of his sensations. He blinked several times, and rolled his eyes wildly. And it was while rolling them that he caught sight of the gesticulating Wrecking Crew on the lower slopes and

found enlightenment. Simultaneously, he observed his ball only a yard and a half from where it had been when he addressed it.

Chester Meredith gave one look at his ball, one look at the flag, one look at the Wrecking Crew, one look at the sky. His lips writhed, his forehead turned vermilion. Beads of perspiration started out on his forehead. And then, with his whole soul seething like a cistern struck by a thunderbolt, he spoke.

"!!!!!!!!!!!!!" cried Chester.

Dimly he was aware of a wordless exclamation from the girl beside him, but he was too distraught to think of her now. It was as if all the oaths pent up within his bosom for so many weary days were struggling and jostling to see which could get out first. They cannoned into each other, they linked hands and formed parties, they got themselves all mixed up in weird vowel-sounds, the second syllable of some red-hot verb forming a temporary union with the first syllable of some blistering noun.

"—! —!! —!!! —!!!! —!!!!! "

cried Chester.

Felicia stood staring at him. In her eyes was the look of one who sees visions.
"***!!! ***!!! ***!!! ***!!!" roared

" *** !!! *** !!! *** !!! " roared Chester, in part.

A great wave of emotion flooded over the girl. How she had misjudged this silvertongued man! She shivered as she thought that, had this not happened, in another five minutes they would have parted for ever, sundered by seas of misunderstanding, she cold and scornful, he with all his music still within him.

"Oh, Mr. Meredith!" she cried, faintly. With a sickening abruptness Chester came to himself. It was as if somebody had poured a pint of ice-cold water down his back. He blushed vividly. He realized with horror and shame how grossly he had offended against all the canons of decency and good taste. He felt like the man in one of those "What Is Wrong With This Picture?" things in the advertisements of the etiquette-books.

"I beg—I beg your pardon!" he mumbled, humbly. "Please, please, forgive me. I should not have spoken like

that."

"You should! You should!" cried the girl, passionately. "You should have said all that and a lot more. That awful man ruining your record round like that! Oh, why am I a poor weak woman with practically no vocabulary that's any use for anything?"

Quite suddenly, without knowing that she had moved, she found herself at his side,

holding his hand.



It was as if all the oaths pent up within his bosom for so many weary days were struggling and jostling to see which could get out first.

"Oh, to think how I misjudged you!" she wailed. "I thought you cold, stiff, formal, precise. I hated the way you you. I wil.—34.

sniggered when you foozled a shot. I see it all now! You were keeping it in for my sake. Can you ever forgive me? $^{\prime\prime}$

Chester, as I have said, was not a very quick-minded young man, but it would have taken a duller youth than he to fail to read the message in the girl's eyes, to miss the meaning of the pressure of her hand on

"My gosh!" he exclaimed, wildly. "Do you mean—? Do you think—? Do you really—? Honestly, has this made a difference? Is there any chance for a fellow, I mean?"

Her eyes helped him on. He felt suddenly

confident and masterful.

"Look here - no kidding - will you marry me?" he said.
"I will! I will!"
"Darling!" cried Chester.

He would have said more, but at this point he was interrupted by the arrival of the Wrecking Crew, who panted up full of apologies; and Chester, as he eyed them, thought that he had never seen a nicer, cheerier, pleasanter lot of fellows in his life. His heart warmed to them. He made a mental resolve to hunt them up some time and have a good long talk. He waved the Grave-Digger's remorse airily

"Don't mention it," he said. "Not at all. Faults on both sides. By the way, my fiancée, Miss Blakeney."

The Wrecking Crew puffed acknowledg-

"But, my dear fellow," said the Grave-gger, "it was—really it was—unfor-Digger, "it was—really givable. Spoiling your shot. dreamed I would send the ball that distance. Lucky you weren't playing an important match."

'But he was," moaned Felicia. "He was trying for the course record, and now

he can't break it."

The Wrecking Crew paled behind their whiskers, aghast at this tragedy, but Chester, glowing with the yeasty intoxication of love, laughed lightly.

'What do you mean, can't break it?" he cried, cheerily. "I've one more shot."

And, carelessly addressing the ball, he holed out with a light flick of his mashieniblick.

HESTER, darling!" said Felicia. They were walking slowly through a secluded glade in the quiet even-

"Yes, precious?"

Felicia hesitated. What she was going to say would hurt him, she knew, and her love

was so great that to hurt him was agony.
"Do you think——" she began. "I
wonder whether—— It's about Crispin."

"Good old Crispin!"

Felicia sighed, but the matter was too vital to be shirked. Cost what it might,

she must speak her mind.

"Chester, darling, when we are married, would you mind very, very much if we didn't have Crispin with us all the time?"

Chester started.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed.

you like him?"

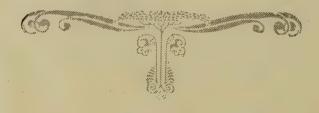
"Not very much," confessed Felicia.
"I don't think I'm clever enough for him. I've rather disliked him ever since we were children. But I know what a friend he is of yours-"

Chester uttered a joyous laugh. "Friend of mine! Why, I can't stand the blighter! I loathe the worm! I abominate the excrescence! I only pretended we were friends because I thought it would put me in solid with you. The man is a pest and should have been strangled at birth. At school I used to kick him every time I saw him. If your brother Crispin tries so much as to set foot across the threshold of our little home, I'll set the dog on him."

'My hero!'' whispered Felicia. "We shall be very, very happy." She drew her arm through his. "Tell me, dearest," she murmured, "all about how you used to

kick Crispin at school."

And together they wandered off into the



HOW I BUILD UP MY PARTS

BY

GEORGE GRAVES RALPH LYNN BILLY LEONARD PEGGY ONEIL STANLEY LUPINO HUNTLEY WRIGHT BINNIE HALE LESLIE HENSON

In the following article several well-known comedy stars reveal their methods of getting laughs. They explain how they instil into every rôle for which they are cast those touches of originality and personality which have made them popular. Incidentally they relate some amusing anecdotes concerning the introduction of impromptu humour. It is interesting to note how very widely their methods differ.

GEORGE GRAVES,

Who created the famous character of Baron Popoff in "The Merry Widow."

HEN anybody hands me the script of a new part in a new musical comedy I feel very much like a painter who has been given a blank canvas and instructed to paint a picture. I don't know where to

begin.

I am not familiar with the ways of painters, but I imagine that after about an hour's steady mastication of their beards they would run round to their clients and say, "Look here, old man, what sort of a picture do you want?" and in reply they would receive a vague sort of suggestion that perhaps a landscape might meet the case. Similarly, after I have read my "script" (which is usually quite as exciting as reading the advertisement on the back of a tram ticket) I begin to get hold of one or two useful situations which give me ideas for fresh comedy lines and "gags." These I "try out" at rehearsals—an absolute "acid test"—for the man who can make a producer laugh could send the Sphinx into hysterics!

Few people realize how much a comedian's reputation depends upon his ability to

build up a part.

When, for instance, a new comedian is discovered in a provincial company people are apt to ask, "Why doesn't he get a part in a West-end production?" In nine cases out of ten the answer is that, although he may be a funny performer, he is not an originator.

Let me plunge into another simile. Humour is a tonic which any well-trained



George Graves-and "Baron Popoff."

man can dispense, but comparatively few know how to make out the prescriptions. It's comparatively easy to be funny with somebody else's material, but to make the material itself is a difficult job. Nevertheless, if the humour in a musical comedy is to be at all spontaneous, it is the performer's place to make it so, not the author's.

When I was first given the "book" of my part in "The Merry Widow" it was so small that the management had the utmost difficulty in restraining me from rolling some tobacco in it and making a cigarette.

But I got the idea firmly fixed into my head that Baron Popoff was rather a gay old dog—one of the has-beens—and the rest came to me, bit by bit, at rehearsals and during the run of the play.

My fellow-actors know my little ways, and always do their best to encourage me.

For instance, one night when I made my entrance looking somewhat bedraggled, one of the characters thought he'd "draw" me by saying, "Who have you been with?"

Immediately, without further thought, I found myself replying, "My old friend Colonel Moppitt." Now as soon as I had coined that name it seemed to open the idea-box, and I added, "Yes—Colonel Moppitt—and my word he does!" The audience were good enough to encourage me by laughing at this, and another idea came to me. "Yes," I said. "He pours whisky on his blotting-paper and uses it as chewing gum." They laughed again—and another idea arrived: "Hence the expression Blotto,'" I added.

And so I went on. When I get going like

this there's no stopping me.

RALPH LYNN.

Of "Tons of Money" fame.

ROM the comedian's point of view, the ideal author for a farce-musical or otherwise-is the one who can write clever comedy situations and mirth-provoking lines which will fit his particular style so perfectly that not a word need be added or altered, and not a single piece of fresh "business" need be introduced before the show is produced. But such an author has yet to be born.

If he is born in my time and starts turning out his masterpieces before I am playing "grandfather" parts I am afraid I shall have to shoot him. He will be too good to live.

Seriously, though, there are limits to an author's capabilities, and comedians have so many personal whims as to how their parts should be played and written that they must be given a certain amount of licence if their performances are to be at all fresh and spontaneous in effect. The funny man who follows the book of a



"Good heavens! What's that? Oh, it's only me!"

light musical comedy or a farce with parrot-like exactness is almost as bad as

the musician who plays his compositions on a

barrel-organ.

I number many authors among my friends, and I must say that they are a kind and considerate race. As a rule they are quite willing to sit at rehearsals and suffer in silence whilst the comedian proceeds to mutilate the children of their brains almost beyond recognition. Occa-

sionally they may heave a sigh and murmur, "Ah, well, I suppose it's for the best"; and if you had ever seen me trying to be funny at rehearsal you would

Take, for example, the highly successful farce "Tons of Money." When I was first shown my part in it, I was full of enthusiasm. It was teeming with full of enthusiasm. and good situations, but, being a comedian and not an author, I saw the part for which I was cast from an entirely fresh angle. It inspired me with all kinds of new ideas for further scraps of dialogue and pieces of "by-play."

I knew, however, that I was utterly incapable of conveying these ideas to anybody else, so that it was hopeless for me to ask

the authors to make such alterations as I thought might improve the part according to my particular interpretation. So I asked for *carte blanche* to revise the part as I thought fit, and every night, after rehearsal, for two solid weeks preceding the production of the play, Miss Yvonne Arnaud, the leading lady, and I would ensconce ourselves in the stage-manager's room, sometimes until eleven o'clock, scribbling and scratching on the original script.

By the time we had finished with it I began to wonder whether the authors would ever forgive us. But I am glad to say we

are still on speaking terms.

As you may know, I specialize in "nervy" parts. I am naturally of a somewhat jumpy temperament, so that this sort of thing comes easy to me. One day I was invited to visit a friend of mine who lived in an old country house which was said to be haunted. He seemed to revel in the idea that ghosts were about, but I simply hated the p'ace. Upon arrival I was conducted by a pale parlourmaid into a musty-looking drawing-

room, which was dimly illuminated by flickering candles, and as soon as I stepped through the door I saw a weird, cadaverous-looking apparition coming towards me.

"My God! What's that?" I shrieked.

"My God! What's that?" I shrieked. The apparition seemed equally startled at my appearance, for he did likewise. It was then that I realized that I was staring at my own reflection in a long mirror which stood

immediately opposite the door.

A few nights later, whilst playing in a dressing-room scene in "Hanky Panky," I was fumbling absent-mindedly with the various toilet requisites on the dressing-table when I chanced to pick up a hand mirror. Glancing into it I instantly recognized my old friend the "apparition," and, quite automatically, I exclaimed once again, "Good heavens! What's that?" Then, with a deep sigh of relief, I added, "Oh, it's only me."

The audience yelled with merriment—and thus, curiously enough, was added one of my most effective contributions to the building

up of a part.

BILLY LEONARD,

Principal comedian in "Catherine," "The Last Waltz," and other Gaiety Theatre successes.

AM not what is called a good "rehearser," and for this reason I fear that I must be responsible for many mana-

gerial grey hairs. I hardly ever learn the actual words of the author's

script until just before the first night of a play, because I feel that if I were to "study" a part too carefully, reproducing exactly the same movements and inflections at each successive rehearsal, I should very soon become a mere automaton—a ribald "Robot."

On the other hand, I don't think it is fair that a producer should be hampered at rehearsal by a comedian who insists upon going his own way without giving due thought to the performance as a whole.

Besides, producers, as a rule, know what they are talking about, and the actor who thinks he has finished learning usually succeeds in proving that he has never learned anything at all. So I make it a rule to do exactly as I am

told, and any personal touches I may introduce into the play when rehearsals are finished are always additions, but never alterations.

There is no means of predicting exactly what will make people

laugh. Good comedy is essentially spontaneous. Most of my ideas for "business" come to me whilst actually on the stage. Some of them, I confess, have been quite accidental.

For example, in a show called "Soldier Boy" Maisie Gay and myself had a dance which was inserted at the end of one of the acts. At rehearsals we had somehow overlooked the fact that, prior to "striking" a scene, the stage hands

always fasten all the doors to prevent them flying open

and causing damage whilst the heavy "flats" are being carried about. On the first night we came to the finish of the dance, tripped gaily towards one of the doors to make our exit, and,

to our surprise, found that it was locked. So, still dancing, . we crossed the stage and tried the opposite door. That also was locked. We tried hard to force it, but were obliged to give up the attempt and pass on to the next. There were five doors in all, and as we hurled ourselves against each of them withoutsuccess the laughter of the audience became louder and louder. Finally, just as the stage manager had decided to draw a veil over the catastrophe by



ringing down the curtain, one of the stage hands, seeing our plight, suddenly unfastened the last door and we both fell through it precipitately!

The following morning the dramatic critics were good enough to praise the "exquisite comedy"at the finish of the dance-and so. to please the Press and the public, Mr. De Courville, the producer, cided that we should continue to be "locked in" nightly for the run of the piece.

PEGGY O'NEIL.

Who created the delightful character of "Paddy the Next Best Thing."

IF I had been older than I am, I would have been Irish. That is to say, my parents were Irish, but they crossed over to America a few years before I was born. So I am an Irish-American—which, like "Paddy," is the "next best thing." You will realize, therefore, that it is as natural for me to play the part of an Irish girl as it would be for Sir James Barrie to appear as Maconochie.

When I first met "Paddy"—my favourite character—in the script of Miss Gertrude Page's play, it did not take me long to get acquainted with her. After a few rehearsals I came to understand her so perfectly that I knew exactly what she would do or say in any given circumstances.

When I had obtained a



thorough grasp of my lines, I put the manuscript aside until the first night of the production. Then I brought it out and propped it up on my dressing-table. Even then I had no occasion to refer to it, but it was a real comfort to know that it was there—something tangible to grasp should I be overcome by nervousness. Honestly, I have quite a sentimental affection for "scripts," and I hoard them as a schoolgirl does her first love-letters—but I am digressing!

Well, as soon as I got into the "skin" of the part, and the play was running smoothly, I began to add a few lines and to introduce little pieces of by-play which had not been rehearsed. Of course, I took care as a rule that these should be in keeping with the character of a little Irish girl—but one particular night I got excited and made an amusing faux pas.

High above the doorway of what was supposed to be my home hung a magnificent

pair of antlers. This night, acting upon a sudden impulse, I snatched off my tamo'-shanter and hurled it up into the air. To my surprise, and to the obvious delight of the audience, it remained suspended upon the majestic antlers! A champion quoits player could not have thrown it better! I was so amused and excited at the discovery of my latent talent as a juggler that I turned to the others on the stage and said, "Sure—did you see that? I'll bet you a nickel I couldn't do it again."

For the moment I didn't realize that I had committed a grave error in making an Irish girl talk about a "nickel"—until a voice from the stalls shouted, "Say, honey, I'll bet you a nickel you could!"

It is, of course, very rarely that a note of pathos is struck by accident. Yet one of

the most tense pieces of acting in "Paddy." was also the outcome of an unrehearsed effect. In the scene where Paddy is working in the dispensary of a London doctor there is a great deal of fun and laughter until her lover asks her whether she wouldn't like

to be back once more in her old home in Ireland. Paddy's beloved home has been sold, and the memory of it brings a lump to her throat. She makes no reply.

Now, when an audience have been laugh-

ing and laughing until they are almost hysterical, it is a very difficult thing to pull them up suddenly with a touch of pathos, and for the first few nights I found this piece of acting rather trying. In stage slang, I knew I could "hold" them, but it was difficult to "get" them-to grip their attention and make them feel the sudden change of emotion.

But as soon as I gave up worrving about the technique and concentrated upon making myself believe that I really was Paddy, the difficulty was instantly overcome. As the actor who was playing opposite me spoke his lines, I pictured the old home as he described it, and I actually felt a lump rise in my At that throat. moment a large glass bottle I had in my hands fell to the floor

in the dispensary scene. hands fell to the floor with a crash. The effect was almost electric. In an instant the laughter of the audience had given place to a tense silence, and they were in sympathy with Paddy. The crash of the bottle had sobered them—it had made them feel just as I felt, and just as I wanted them to feel.



Peggy O'Neil as "Paddy" in the dispensary scene.

STANLEY LUPINO.

The Drury Lane pantonime star and creator of many rôles in revue and musical comedy.

HEN preparing a new show I try, first of all, to bear in mind that humour should be, so to speak, democratic. I do not believe in playing to the gallery—and I believe still less in playing to the stalls. An audience is composed of a varied assortment of people of different classes, but if

the spirit of true comedy is to prevail, it should laugh as a body, and not as a number of separate sections.

It doesn't concern me at all whether a



situation, or a sketch, or a piece of dialogue is what some people call "West-endy," or whether it will appeal to "the gods." Either it is funny or it is not funny. Although audiences do vary to some extent in different theatres, a comedian who knows his job and whose performance is clean should —and generally does—appeal to stalls and gallery simultaneously.

But that does not mean that he should

study of the "book." As a slight example of the value of scenery in comedy, I well remember the fun Will Evans and myself extracted from a nursery scene in the Drury Lane pantomime, "The Babes in the Wood," a few years ago. We were the babes, and Lily Long, who played the nurse, was supposed to be putting us to bed. As this little piece of comedy did not take place until the middle of that



either confine his attention to broad knockabout comedy or go to the other extreme by depending entirely upon subtle and witty lines. Rather he should try to strike the happy medium in both directions. Speaking from a purely personal point of view, I have found that a comic fall, if really well done, will extract just as much laughter from the stalls as from the gallery, and that, on the other hand, a really witty line will "get over" to all parts of the theatre. In other words, I think it is best to try to appeal to human nature, and not to try to flatter one section of an audience at the risk of insulting the others.

Strange though it may seem, the first thing I do when I commence to study a new part is to look at the scenery. The "atmosphere" of a particular setting is, to me, far more important than that of the theatre itself. A staircase in a convenient position, a window here, a lampshade there, will give me more ideas than several hours' hard

particular scene, the bed was made up to look as though it were occupied, and there was a hole cut in the scenery beneath the bed (and concealed by the valance) to enable us to make our way into it unobserved by the audience, just before we were due to be "discovered."

One night, whilst in a particularly foolish mood, I was standing upright on the bed when I lost my balance and toppled out of the window. Anxious not to spoil the end of the scene by such an abrupt exit, I immediately crawled back to the stage through the hole in the scenery. Meanwhile, Lily Long, fearing that I had hurt myself, had rushed anxiously to the window. Her surprise when she turned round and found me lying snugly tucked up in the bed was quite unassumed, and therefore all the funnier. She laughed, Will Evans laughed, I laughed, and the audience yelled. Needless to say, that incident was retained for the run of the pantomime.

HUNTLEY WRIGHT.

Principal comedian at Daly's Theatre.

SHOULD like to preface my remarks by emphasizing that the plays produced at Daly's Theatre differ from the majority of modern musical comedies in that they do

not contain what I call "go as you please" parts. They are, in fact, the nearest approach to light opera we have in this country—with the exception of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas—and they are written and constructed with a great deal of care and thought.

The comedian who is cast for a part in a show of this description must make a really serious study of the character he is to portray or the whole atmosphere of the play will be

destroyed.

Extravagant buffoonery and topical references to "Tishy" or "Joe Beckett" may be ad-mirable in a farcical comedy or a revue, but they are entirely out of place in, say, a play like "Madame Pompadour." which is an historically correct representation of life in France round about the year 1760. Just imagine the effect if, after the author, the lyric writer, the producer, the scenic artist, and the costumier have taken considerable pains to study

the period in order to be faithful to detail, an over-ambitious "funny man" were to make a taux pas and destroy the entire illusion. So I think it is worth while for any performer who really enjoys his work to do his utmost to see that everything he does or says in order to raise laughs shall be "in the

The secret of success in a production of the type likely to appeal to an educated audience is team work. comedian must realize that the play was not written for him alone—he is only part of the mosaic—and if at first sight

his part seems thin and lacking humour, he must remember that the author, who is usually a man of experience, aims at the general effect, balancing one character carefully against another. The performer who wants "all the fat" is like the football half-back who wants to do the centreforward's job as well as his own. He spoils the game. Therefore, when I am given the "script" of a part, I study it

carefully and endeavour to soak myself in the atmosphere of the play. Any additions or alterations that may be necessary are only made subject to the author's approval. When preparing for the rôle of a Chinaman in "San Toy," I spent several

hours each day at the Chinese Legation nearly a month in order to understand

the character, his clothes and his mannerisms. Although I have. in the past, played many parts in which

broader comedy was essential, I cannot say that I have enjoyed them nearly as much as those which have given me an opportunity for careful character study.

My devotion to detail has often been the subject of good-natured chaff from my fellowactors. Quite recently a friend who had seen me in "Madame Pompadour"

thought he had "caught me out" because I had introduced into my part a

reference to the "Hallelujah Chorus," which he imagined to be a comparatively recent composit i o n. Subsequent research revealed that "The Messiah," of which the chorus is a part, was written in 1741 — when



Huntley Wright in private life.

Madame Pompadour was twenty; so I won

my bet.

Again, it is important that a comedian's make-up should be put on properly. To my mind, a badly-fitting wig or any other fault that emphasizes artificiality destroys the illusion. Although my make-up is not in any sense an attempt at disguise, I like to feel that it is convincing. I do not want the

audience to say to one another at my first entrance, "This is Huntley Wright." I would rather they regarded me as Calicot, the Poet, or whatever character I am playing. In other words, when portraying a character ℓ try to convey not my own personality, but that of the character for which I am cast. Therein lies the subtle difference between the comedian and the humorist.

BINNIE HALE,

Daughter of Robert Hale, and now a talented star in her own right.

DURING the first few years of my stage career I was privileged to work under the expert guidance of the late Sir Charles Hawtrey and other past-masters of dramatic technique. Naturally, I was so absorbed in learning what they had to tell me that I did not have much opportunity to think about building up my parts. Nevertheless, as soon as rehearsals were over I began, unconsciously, to develop my own little mannerisms and movements, and it was a great delight to find that I was gradually getting into the way of adding my own "laughs" to the parts I was playing.

"laughs" to the parts I was playing.
In "My Nieces," for example, I was playing the part of a "flapper" schoolgirl, and



In an imitation of Beatrice Lillie singing "Snoops the Lawyer."



Wonderfully made up as Miss José Collins.

there was a scene in which "Uncle" (Ralph Lynn) was supposed to enter the room and discover me writing busily at a desk. One night, just for a joke, I got hold of the scratchiest pen I have ever seen—

or heard—and just as Ralph Lynn was about to enter I commenced to scratch away as furiously as possible, making the most appalling noise and setting everybody's teeth "on edge." To my surprise, the sound penetrated to all parts of the theatre, and there came a tremendous roar of laughter. "Uncle" Ralph was rather disconcerted, but his ready humour came to his rescue, and in his typically nervous style he suddenly exclaimed, "Hark! Mice—with clogs on!" That set the audience

laughing again, and after that the scratchy pen became an important item among the

properties of the play.

In revue, of course, one has an even greater opportunity to develop a part—or, rather, several parts—involving careful character study. When I was first rehearsing the part of the poverty-stricken Cockney girl in the Embankment scene from "Puppets," for instance, I pictured the character so vividly in my mind's eye that I knew exactly the clothes she should wear; and I even went so far as to decide that unless I could get a particular style of coat I should never

"feel" the part properly. It took several weeks of searching in secondhand clothes shops to find the right coat, but we succeeded at last, and as soon as I put it on I felt as though I had instantly become the character I was trying to portray.

With mimicry it is just the same. I can give a passable imitation of, say, Miss José Collins in my own clothes—but dress me so that I look something like her and

the impersonation is heaps easier.

Yes, if you ask me what I consider the most helpful item in building up a part, my answer is "Clothes."

LESLIE HENSON.

Of the Winter Garden Theatre.

AM not, as a rule, what you would call a methodical man. I have upon occasions been caught in the absent-minded act of trying to put my shirt on over my braces. But when it comes to the serious business of building up a part, I am the most systematic soul alive. It may be difficult for you to understand how spontaneous humour can be born of systematic preparation, but I have found by experience system pays. (Correspondence colleges for courses in comedy please note.)

Yes, there is method in my madness, though some people declare there is madness in my methods. Anyhow, I'll describe them to you, then you can judge for yourselves.

to you, then you can judge for yourselves. When first I receive the script of a new part I take it home with me and read it in bed. When I have absorbed the details of the plot and made up my mind as to how the particular character for which I am chosen should be portrayed, I sometimes sit down and elaborate the story, developing the fellow's full history from childhood upwards, drawing upon my imagination for his idiosyncrasies and mannerisms until I feel that I know him as a bosom friend. That helps me to ensure that all my "gags" and by-play shall be quite in keeping with the character.

Another evening with the "script" enables me to memorize the salient features of the part, and I am now ready for rehearsals. At rehearsals, provided I am "in the mood," I endeavour to introduce as much spontaneous fun as possible into my work, whilst Mr. Christy, my secretary, dresser, and personal adviser, stands in the wings and makes a note of any new lines I



may happen to introduce into the play. From his notes I am able to revise the "book." Instead of scribbling all over the script I now sit down and type out a complete copy of my revised part, which is fitted into a loose-leaf prompt book.

Thus the part is built up day by day, and as alterations and additions are made I re-type the necessary pages and insert them in my prompt book. This continues until the show has been running perhaps a fortnight or more by which time I am usually

more, by which time I am usually fairly satisfied with the part as it stands, and further alterations (except for minor topical "gags") are few and far between. Thus, on the last night of the show my prompt book is as clean and orderly as ever, and, what is most important, perfectly legible. I hope you'll excuse me patting myself on the back about this, but it's the only little bit of system in my muddled life, so I feel justified in letting the world know about it. Incidentally, it may interest you to know that copies of my prompt book are sent out to other comedians who are playing my parts on tour all over the world, so that those who see the touring companies are certain of getting an almost exact replica of the original West-end productions.

"By-play," clowning, silent humour—such as drinking the canary's water or using a loaf of bread as a walking stick—are usually introduced during the run of the show. Which leads me to a true story which I've been bursting to tell you.

When "Yes, Uncle" was first produced, I had a scene with a clever young girl who was then an inexperienced novice, but is now a famous star. I don't think she'll mind if I tell you—her name is Margaret Bannerman. She had to speak a line, "I am going to buy a petticoat," and one evening, when I happened to feel particularly flippant, I replied, "Petticoat? Certainly, madam; step this way." I then proceeded in dumb show to go through the movements of

This was one of the most successful bits of "business" I have ever introduced, and seemed to tickle the audience immensely. I made a mental note to keep it in the show for the rest of the run.

Judge of my astonishment, therefore, when, on the following night, Miss Bannerman spoke her lines and walked off the



"I then proceeded in dumb show to go through the movements of the typical draper's assistant."

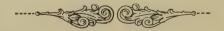
the typical draper's assistant—taking down the imaginary goods from an imaginary shelf, making out an imaginary bill, getting it signed by an imaginary shopwalker, placing it with imaginary money in an imaginary wooden ball and sending it along imaginary wires, $vi\hat{a}$ the dress circle, to an imaginary pay desk, tying up the imaginary parcel, watching the return of the imaginary ball with imaginary change, and so on.

stage! Afterwards I remonstrated with her. "What about the 'selling the petticoat' business I did last night?" I said.

"Oh," she said, with sweet innocence, "did you want to do that again? I thought you were only just fooling."

And she seemed quite surprised when I gently pointed out that "just fooling" was the very thing I was paid to do.

Photographs by Hana, Stage Photo Co., Foulsham & Banfield, Claude Harris, Bertram Park, Dorothy Wilding, Ernest H. Mills, and Navana





ILLUSTRATED BY W. HATHERELL R.I.

HE porter who handled little Miss Baker's baggage at the railway terminus summed her up with one glance. To him, cynically expert in swift classification, spinster-ladies were sharply divisible into the "'oly terrors" and the "softies." Little Miss Baker, in cotton gloves and a dowdy hat, was quite obviously a "softie." He endured her fussily-reiterated injunctions to be quite sure her trunks were labelled to Chipping Knoxton and not to Lower Knoxton with the prospective consolation of touching his cap and saying, in an aggrieved voice, "What's this, lidy?" to whatever coin she might produce.

But, as he put her into her first-class compartment with a reminder that she should change at Hadworth Junction, even his hardened effrontery failed to query the tip she gave him. He went off, crediting her with a generosity of spirit that was, in fact, undeserved; Miss Baker was still thinking in terms of the five-franc and ten-lire notes extorted from her by a long succession of French and Italian railway servants.

For little Miss Baker was returning from the great adventure of her life. For eighteen months she had been wandering, quite alone, from place to place of France, Italy, and Switzerland; staying, sometimes for months, so long as the mood of sojourn held her, moving on again as fancy counselled. The retrospect of it thrilled her yet with its incredible audacity.

Miss Baker belonged to that genus of mouse-like spinsters whose age, during most of their life, remains indeterminately between twenty-seven and forty. Actually, she was yet six months from thirty-three. Had she ever acquired the knack of placing instead of jamming the hat upon her head; had

she ever purchased her clothes with any other criterion than that of their wearing qualities; had she ever conceived of herself as a young woman upon whom a masculine eye might by any possibility rest with interest; had a benevolent tyrant of a Frenchwoman got hold of her, stripped her to the skin, re-clothed her, taught her to walk as though she had at least an equal right upon this earth—she might have been revealed, to her own astonished reflection in the mirror, as distinctly attractive. There was a candour in her shy grey eyes, a purity of outline in the curve from cheek to chin, a winsomeness in the smile of her sensitive little mouth, a something in the slimness of her figure, that were potentialities masked at the best of times by the drabbling inelegance of her attire and the wispy untidiness of the fair hair that escaped from its screwed-up bunch. As, demurely, diffidently but courageously, she "did" the sights, the kindest of those who noticed her called her "quaint." And so it happened that, after all that long journeying, she returned as friendless as she had started.

In that second-class hotel at Perugia, indeed, there had been a pathetic little middle-aged man, shyer even than herself, who, after much clearing of his throat, had ventured on a remark about Raphael's Fresco and then, emboldened, had suggested a walk to see the sunset-view from the Frontone Garden. He had left next day, and that had been her nearest approach to any intimacy of companionship.

In Paris she had sat innocently at the outside tables of boulevard cafés and watched the unceasing stream of humanity flow past, as unspoken-to as though she were in solitude upon a river-bank. In the Bois de Boulogne she had hovered shyly

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outside the railings of the Pré Catalan and caught a glimpse of beautifully-dressed girls 'and immaculate young men dancing to a strident, clashing, weirdly moaning music beyond the umbrella-shaded tables crowded with equally elegant men and women chattering over afternoon tea. At Montreux the lake-steamer had been invaded by a swarm of young people returning from a tennis tournament, blazers and white flannels mingling with white knee-short frocks and fillet-bound pretty heads, laughing and joking together in happy confidence that the world was made for them, from whose propinquity she had unaccountably slunk away to the second-class. In Venice, sitting in her gondola, she had seen the other gondolas glide past, each with its pair of lovers lazy in the cushions. In Florence she had come upon, with a peculiar little shock, honeymooners furtively squeezing hands in a pretence of looking at the pictures; in Rome she had looked away awkwardly from the arm-embraced couples going dreamily in the twilight to the balustrade of the Pincio Hill, had renounced, herself, that view across the deep-lying immensity of the city to the misty dome of St. Peter's, and the flashing red, white, and green light distant on the Janiculum.

In general she had avoided such places. Her best memories were those of the vast solitude of Versailles on a Wednesday, of the old-world conical-towered battlements of Dijon, of a little deep-roofed village high up among flower-studded meadows that lapped at the white austerity of the Alps, of the quiet colonnaded antiquity of Treviso, of the uplifted peace of Assisi on a May morning, of the little hotel at Capri when the steamer-tourists had gone and the jingling cab-horses went slowly up the steep hill. The places of fashionable resort afflicted her with a humiliating feeling of exclusion. She had looked at the exquisitely-dressed people unembarrassed upon the terraces of first-class hotels with a curious feeling that either they or she were not real; they belonged to another world—the world of the heroes and heroines of those novels whose perusal led her into day-dreams from which she awakened with a blush. If, setting out, a faint unacknowledged anticipation of personal romance had lurked in her, it had long ago been killed. No one would ever take any notice of her. That was settled.

She leaned back now in her seat, watching the telegraph-posts flash past and the fields pivot upon the middle-distance, wondering, with a tremulcus pride in her achievement, what would be her reception in Chipping Knoxton. It might be anticipated that the vicar would invite her to give a lanternlecture of her experiences, as Miss Smithson

had done. Of course, she would refuse! She could not conceive herself standing up on a platform, and, besides, her memories were too precious to be crudely exhibited in public. Even from the prospect of the teaparties where Miss Smithson, Mrs. Whittinghame, and the other female dragons of the village would hypocritically admire, and secretly be scandalized by, her audacity, she shrank sensitively. But she would have to nerve herself to it. She must take up her life again.

ER mind went back to the inception of her great adventure. It had been on her thirty-first birthday. She had waked up to memory of the anniversary—had shed a solitary little tear as she sipped her bedside tea. There had been no letters on the tray for her. It was absurd, of course; there was no one to write to her—but the sense of isolation had been illogically acute.

She had relapsed back to her pillows, and reviewed her life, past, present, and future. Here in this quiet, ivy-mantled house, where for so many years she had nursed her invalid widowed mother, she would fritter out her existence, uncared for, unimportant, to a lonely old age. She revolted from it frightened. The mood of revolt was still upon her as she dressed, looked out upon the placid meadows at the termination of the village street. And then suddenly the idea had flashed into her, making her sit down abruptly in the nearest chair, fluttering breathlessly, her heart thumping, as she contemplated it.

Why shouldn't she do something—travel? Other women travelled, went almost familiarly to that scarcely imaginable Continent; Miss Smithson, Miss Carruthers, Mrs. Marcourt. Why not she? She had money enough. Her mother had been dead more than a year-she was out of mourning. The project took shape in her, tempting her so that she felt swimmy-headed. Why not she? She surrendered, with a little thrill of fear at herself, overcame the fear with a daring boldness. She also would travel, but she would not go, snubbed and insignificant, with a conducted party, as did Miss Smithson and the rest. She would travel alone, independent, staying where she liked, as long as she liked, going where she liked. She would go at once before resolution failed in her. Trembling at her own audacity, her head sizzling like soda-water in a glass in the excitement that flushed her cheeks, she had rung the bell for Mrs. Harrison, her immemorial housekeeper, had convulsed that portly body with incredulity. "You don't mean it, Miss Christabel!"

But she had meant it; at a screwed-up tension of resolve had ignored the shocked



It was a baby!

expostulations, the lifted eyebrows, of the elder ladies of the village, had departed, to relax only when the first ordeal of the French Customs had been passed and Amiens Cathedral—she had read about Amiens—was brought into visibility by the alarmingly bumping, swaying train.

And now she was going back, underneath her treasured memories secretly perhaps a little disillusioned. Her heart was still empty. It had no business to ache. She was not one of those for whom the great affair of life had any use. An essential little touch of magic had been left out of her composition.

She duly changed at Hadworth Junction, waited on the platform for the branch-line train to Chipping Knoxton. It came in, simultaneous with another express. In an instant the platform was overrun with

a seething, jostling mass of travellers trying to go rapidly in conflicting directions. Flustered by the sudden clamour, by the raucously strident voices of porters shouting strings of stations in a menace of imminent departure as they slammed-to the carriagedoors with unnerving violence, she pushed her way through the crowd and found herself suddenly hoisted by a brusque and harassed porter into an empty first-class carriage just in front of her. A rather nicelooking young woman had the moment before got out of it, carefully closed the door behind her, and then run, as if in great haste, along the platform towards the London express. But Miss Baker did not remember that till later.

At the moment her senses were in a blur from the bustle of that platform and the unexpected man-handling of that officious porter. She sat down, dizzily, panting a little. Then, as she recovered clarity, she noticed a white shawl lying heaped upon the seat. Someone—that young woman—had forgotten it. She went to pick it up, with the intent of handing it over to the railway officials. To her surprise, the heap was comparatively solid to the touch. She moved it. It was heavy. It was a baby! And then, with horrified alarm, she noticed that the train was already moving fast out of the station.

What should she do? There was no corridor, along which she might reach the guard. Pull the communication cord?—or wait till the next station? There were two, widely-spaced, between Hadworth Junction and Chipping Knoxton—Netherway and Princes Pelham. At Netherway she would call the guard. She bent down over that white bundle, steadying it with one hand lest the jolting of the train over the points should shake it off the seat, looked down at the tiny face. As she looked, two blue eyes opened in it, its features contorted themselves, and it un-

mistakably began to cry.

In a spasm of scared embarrassment, Miss Baker sat down and took the bundle on her lap. At the feel of it, a wave of pity almost swamped her acute apprehension. "There, then!—there, then!" she cooed to it. The baby's cry ceased. Its blue eyes looked at her wonderingly. "There, then!" Poor dear little mite! Something surged up from suddenly-opened deeps in Miss Baker's soul. Her hand was trembling as, with a greatly daring forefinger, she scratched lightly on its cheeks, instinctively provoking the smile. Smile the baby didand at that smile Miss Baker, with eyes that went unexpectedly moist, impulsively bent down and kissed it. Poor little darling!—how wicked to leave it like that!

Her hand touched upon a piece of paper pinned to the shawl. There was writing upon it. She turned it the right way up

and read it:

"His name is Noel. He is six months old. His next feed is due at four o'clock and it is in the bottle. Be good to him."

That young woman must have had some feeling for it, then—but how could she have brought herself to have abandoned her baby? Miss Baker's innocent mind was baffled, not for the first time, by the inexplicability of other human beings. Poor little mite! If the miracle of owning a baby had come to her, she would have died rather than relinquish it. The weight of even this other woman's baby in her arms was a subtle solace to a vague ache in her, never before realized. What would happen to it—the workhouse? Would they

be good to him there? And then, as the baby gurgled under the almost automatic caress of her finger-tips on his cheek, smiled, thrillingly alive and human, a startling idea shot through her—as startling as that other idea which had flashed into her eighteen months before. And, as then, she felt herself go alternately hot and cold as she contemplated it. Suppose she adopted it?

T was impossible—mad—she with a baby! She trembled as she sat there hugging it, dallying with the temptation. And an alarming imp in herself whispered to her insinuatingly. Why not? There was no clue to the parents. They had abandoned it. No one would ever claim it. She pictured to herself the bleak horror of the workhouse. But that was the right thing to do, of course! And, in instinctive contradiction, she hugged the bundle closer, tremulous with the conflict in herself. Once more it smiled up at her with a happy gurgle. Once more her eyes went wet and, with an irresistible craving for the love of this tiny living thing, she bent down and kissed the little face.

The train stopped at Netherway. The guard passed along, glanced in at the window. She watched him with fascinated eyes, while her dry lips refused to frame a sound. The train moved on again.

The train jogged on through the quiet countryside, but Miss Baker had no eyes for the familiar landmarks. She smiled at that tiny, round-faced morsel of humanity, kissed it, hugged it, kissed it again, in the intoxicating tremor of a committed crime.

Her mind worked feverishly at details of possible installation. She felt for the bottle in the shawl. It was there, full. It would have to be heated, of course. At four o'clock. It was now two. She should be home at half-past—in that quiet, ivymantled house where Mrs. Harrison would be awaiting her. She imagined the good soul's horrified astonishment. What room should she put him in? The big one overlooking the yew-shaded lawn at the back. She began to plot out re-arrangements, redecoration lavish in the use of white paint.

The train stopped at Princes Pelham. She shrank suddenly back into a far corner. Coming along the platform was a large figure in black broadcloth that was only too familiar. It was the vicar. Would he, mercifully, pass by? No. He stopped at the carriage-door, threw it open, entered—tall, imposing, blandly benignant. He recognized her at once, shook hands with her, his gaze lingering in surprised curiosity upon that unhideable baby.

"Why, Miss Baker!" he exclaimed, urbanely cordial. "Back again from your

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travels? What a long time you've been away, to be sure! How many months is itsix, at least?"

"Eighteen," she said, with the sparse

breath left her by a thumping heart.

He settled himself in the opposite corner. "Eighteen? Dear me! dear me! how time flies! It seems only yesterday since you went." It seemed an eternity to Miss Baker. He unfolded his newspaper, looked at her over the top of it. "And whose very fine baby is that?" he asked, in goodhumoured condescension of interest.

She was suddenly confused. If she explained that she had found it on the seat, would he not insist on her handing it immediately to the authorities ?-to the workhouse? She might not get it again! She saw herself menaced with an irrecoverable loss. Her arms tightened round it instinctively as she stammered out, with no clear sense of the implication of her words:-

"He's mine!"

The vicar put down his paper with a jerk, stared at her in unaffected astonishment.

"Dear me! dear me!" he said, apologetically. "How exceedingly stupid of me! But you have been away from us so long that you must excuse me. We had not even heard of your marriage, Mrs.er-Mrs.-?" He finished on a note of interrogation.

It was her turn to look surprised.

"But I'm not married!" she exclaimed. The vicar stared at her speechlessly.

Little Miss Baker—of all people?

And then it flashed on her. She went white, and red again. There was a tumult in her ears. Tell him?-explain everything ?-and risk losing it? She had the vaguest notions of the legality of her action. And then the Tempter, who, so the theologians tell us, is ever-ready behind our shoulders, whispered to her, with perhaps a Mephistophelean smile and lift of the eyebrows, a desperate audacity. Let him think - let everybody think - that - that something had happened in those eighteen months while she had been away. It made the baby unalienably hers! No one would query it.

The vicar found his voice.

"Er-did I understand you-?" he said, tentatively.

Her face was scarlet as she answered.

"I'm not married."

He stared from her to the baby, and genuine commiseration succeeded to his scandalized astonishment. Poor little Miss Baker—of all people!

"Dear me! dear me!" he said. "What a terrible position! father——? But surely the

She must stop that at once. She could Vol. lxvii.-35.

not tell what dangers lav hidden in a wellmeaning inquiry into the child's paternity.

"I—I do not know the father," she

stammered.

The vicar was a good man and endeavoured to practise charity, but his code was not elastic. He frowned. He frowned again.

"My poor dear child! This is indeed painful—most painful! That dreadful Continent! If I could only persuade young people to stay contentedly at home! And now, I presume, you have come back to dispose of your house and furniture and we shall see you no more among us?"

"No," she answered, innocently less bold than she sounded, "I have come back to live in my house."

The vicar's glance almost went hostile before he could control it, worthily, to

shocked expostulation.

"But, my dear Miss Baker! You cannot think--! The-the most unwelcome scandal! There is unfortunately a classhe made a gesture. "But respected parishioners such as you—to whom the village looks for an example!" He could say no

Her eyes filled with tears. She held the

bundle tightly to her. It was asleep.
"I'm sorry," she said. "I can't help it." He looked at her severely, shrugged his shoulders, picked up his paper.
"Of course," he said, "if you take that

attitude, I'm afraid there's nothing I can

say."

She swallowed, forced back the imminent torrent of tears, forced back the almost irresistible impulse to cry out that he was misjudging her, that it wasn't so, that the baby wasn't hers. Something stronger than herself answered for her, frightening her.

"I—I'm afraid there isn't."

THE train stopped at Chipping Knoxton. She descended to the platform, the shawl-wrapped baby in her arms, and passed through a purgatory of astonished glances. There was no one on that platform she had not known all her life. The vicar turned to her as he passed through the ticket-barrier.

"Good afternoon, Miss Baker." To her sensitive ears there seemed almost a pointed significance in his unstressed pronunciation of her name.

The cab for which she had telegraphed was waiting for her outside the station. She Behind her, the porter went towards it. pushing her barrow-load of trunks tipped a knowing wink to the cabman. She just caught his answering grin as she climbed, awkward with her unaccustomed burden, into the vehicle.

The cab rolled off between the green hedges

towards the just-seen end of the village street. She looked down to the bundle in her arms, uncovered its face, gazed at it, kissed it, hugged it up close to her, whispered to it sobbingly, through a burst of tears that could not longer be restrained.

"Baby !--baby mine !--you're mine now

-really, really mine-after this !"

The baby looked at her with round wondering eyes.

I T was a year later. On the neat evergreen-surrounded lawn behind the ivymantled house, in one of the promontories of shade that jutted into the golden blaze of summer sunshine, Miss Baker sat crosslegged upon the turf, playing with a baby that could just run in and out of her arms. The baby's chuckling laugh as he clutched at the untidy wisps of her fair hair mounted to a scream of delight when, with a radiant face, she tossed her head back from him in pretended impotence to escape from his finally achieved grasp. She also laughed, caressingly, merrily, in a spontaneity of

simple happiness.

She changed the game, rolled him upon the grass, buried her face in the soft folds of his neck, tumbled him to and fro upon his back with a mirth-arousing hand working its fingers into his plump little barrel of a body, until he almost choked with spluttering merriment. She gave him breathing-space and he sat up again, beseeching her to renew the sport with an intensely earnest attempt at articulation of his first imperfect words —" Mum — mum — mum ! — 'gain !" laughed uncontrollably in anticipation. She obeyed, rolled him over and over, herself on her knees, laughing too, with her face bent down close to his, until the adventurous black and white wagtail on the lawn flew off in sudden alarm at his exultant crow of excessive pleasure and the strawhatted old gardener, working on the flowerbeds beyond the evergreens, ceased his leisurely toil and stood, leaning on his rake, to contemplate them.

They were, in fact, a picture to arrest the eye, an idyll of young mother and child playing as the thought-free animals play in the warm primeval sunshine. Looking herself strangely younger with her flushed cheeks and happy eyes—the most critical would not have given her more than a tousled twenty-five—she pulled the unsatiated sturdy toddler to her lap for a rest, commenced yet another game that was already a familiar

delight.

"This little pig went to market—this little pig stayed at home——" she began, in her thrilled soft voice, plucking one by one at the little toes square across his plump bare foot. "This little pig ran squealing—

wee-wee-wee-wee !—all the way home!" And she scurried with her fingers all the way up his body.

He kicked his fat legs in ecstasy.

"Pig-ig—mahtit!" he insisted. "More!"
And once more this little pig went to
market.

She drew his head of golden curls close against her, looked into his blue eyes, so bright and alive, so charged with unmistakable, novel, even sometimes rebellious personality, kissed him. She could not have expressed all she felt for him. There were no words for it. Her heart brimmed. He was hers. What mattered it that he was not born of her body?—he was born of her soul, born of long years of lonely yearnings, purchased with bitter solitary tears of humiliation, humiliations that bit like acids into her even while she gloried, wickedly, in the equivocation that justified them. They were the price that made him hers.

Mrs. Harrison came out from the house, stood over them, contemplating them, with arms folded over her broad white apron.

"Well, no one can say he isn't a lovely child!" she opined, her matter-of-fact face softening in feminine susceptibility to a beautiful infant, whence-ever it may emanate. It was not the first time she had made this remark; nor yet the thousandth. It had become an habitual comment.

Miss Baker looked up at her as she clasped

him.

"Oh-he's lovely!" she exclaimed, ecs-

tatically, "and he's mine!"

Mrs. Harrison frowned involuntarily. Poor Mrs. Harrison! Miss Baker's conscience smote her. Mrs. Harrison could not be expected to approve, had never approved, though she had stayed loyally by her from that famous afternoon when consternation had exploded in the quiet, ivy-mantled house. She had been given no explanation, had asked for none. Miss Christabel had chosen to preserve a stubborn silence, and Mrs. Harrison was not one to pry into other people's affairs-not she! But she hadand she had let it be seen—grieved in silence, her pride of respectability deeply outraged. Miss Christabel !- her Miss Christabel !--of all people!

She stood now, pursing her lips together, saying nothing lest (as she told herself) she should say something she might regret.

Miss Baker's glance interrogated her.
"Did you want me for anything, Mrs.
Harrison?" she asked.

"No, Miss Christabel. I only came out

to pick a few raspberries for lunch."

Miss Baker smiled. She and the baby were by no means on the direct route to the raspberry canes. The truth was that



"And whose very fine baby is that?" asked the vicar.
"He's mine!"
He stared at her in unaffected astonishment.

Mrs. Harrison had yielded, as she did a dozen times a day on the flimsiest of pretexts, to the temptation of getting near the baby for a moment. For Mrs. Harrison spoiled him, the maid-servants spoiled him, everybody in that ivy-mantled house spoiled that fascinating, laughing, chuckling, sometimes naughty, inarticulate little mite of humanity that had no right to be there—and Miss Baker had not infrequently to react against the danger with a severity that made her heart ache. He should grow up (she had vowed it in long wakeful watches of the night) the ideal man, courteous, strong, self-reliant, honest, unselfish.

Hers! She had indeed made him hers. Looking back over the past year she marvelled at her own fortitude. It had meant, not once but many times, a summoningup, from unsuspected reserves in her sensitive soul, of all her moral strength not to blench, not to break down in the social humiliations that were the corollary of the undisputed possession of her treasure. needed nerve to push the perambulator, as she did push it day after day-for the baby's mind must be expanded by new sights and sounds—through the inescapable length of village street that lay between her and the green lanes, and hear behind her back the scarcely suppressed sniggers of the village people, to meet those highly respectable, primly virtuous ladies who decorated the church on festivals for the vicar, with whom formerly she had been on terms of lifelong parallel intimacy, and see herself passed with a sniff and a cold stare that swept over her. Yet she endured it, endured it at all costs for possession of the curly-headed miracle that crowed at her from the perambulator; underneath the burning scorch of the stigma—and here she knew she sinned-secretly thrilling with the flattery that she—timorous little starved she!-was, with whatever surprise, regarded as woman enough for the sin they imputed to her. People spoke of her now as "That Miss Baker," no longer as "That poor little Miss Baker"; she could have imitated the precise tone in which they said it.

For his sake she braved other yet more terrifying ordeals. She had an interview with the registrar; lay awake all one night in cold fright at the penalties for false statement printed on the paper he gave her. She had the baby christened—"Noel Baker"—stood without flinching while the vicar, his lips pressed tight, wrote "Father unknown" in his great book. And, for her private behoof, she went regularly, unspokento, a pariah, to church—prayed, in an innocent soul-searching anguish, for forgiveness of that sin of secret exultation in her imputed

shame which she could not justify by any code of morals known to her.

She wondered sometimes whether, had she declared the truth, been authoritatively permitted to adopt the baby, he would have meant so much to her-realized, even as she wondered, that he would not have been quite the same, not quite so near and inexpressibly Apart from the ever-present dread of his real parents suddenly appearing even now to claim him, her illegitimate assumption of maternity, for all its bitter corollaries. not only made him unquestionably hers: the make-believe, the very scandal she created, was an indefinable stolen satisfaction for instincts fiercely if unavowedly hungry in her, an assertion of feminine, if illicit, triumph against the scorn intangible about the woman unused in the weaving of the web of life. Therein was-and she knew it—her real sin. And she held to it stubbornly, though her conscience beat at

THOSE were speculations forced on her out of doors. Secluded with him behind the yew hedges of her house, nothing else mattered. He filled her universe. He plucked her from her thoughts, even as he plucked her now.

"Pig-ig! mahtit!—more!"

She looked into his roguish little face, the little white teeth that had been so trouble-some in coming uncovered by the winning smile of his little mouth, the blue eyes under the mop of golden curls glistening as he tugged at her hand.

"Pig-ig! mahtit!—more!—mum-mum-

mum !—more!"

He jerked his plump little bare feet at her as he sat.

She smiled at him.

"I'll play pig-wig with you if you say 'Mummy' and not 'mum-mum-mum,'" she said, seriously. "Mummy!" She pronounced it distinctly for him.

He looked at her as though he understood. "Mum-mum-mum!" he tried, earnestly, baffled for the exact articulation of this new word she demanded. He was at that stage in his talk when such few words as he had mastered were achieved capriciously, by happy accident. "Mum-mum-mum! Pigig! Mum-mum-mum!" He couldn't do it. He looked pathetic.

She forgave him, chided herself for her impatience. Presently, in good time, he would call her "Mummy"—later, for all his life, would call her "Mother." She smiled

at his discomfiture.

"All right, darling. Next time, then—next time you say 'Mummy, please!'—Now," she took up the little foot, and he started to laugh in premature enjoyment, not

waiting for her. "This little pig went to market-

Mrs. Harrison stood over them again, a basketful of raspberries in her hand.

"It does one good to hear him laugh," she remarked. "Reminds me of my own little Dick," she added, with a sigh.

Miss Baker looked up sympathetically. Mrs. Harrison's Dick had been killed in the

"Don't," she murmured. "I can't bear to think of such things."

Mrs. Harrison moved her head up and

down in the gravity of abiding sorrow.

"Ah," she said, "they come and they go—and so we all do, I suppose, all of us." The good soul was in a mood for gossip. She paused for effect. "There's that poor Miss Anderson up at the Manor—she's dead, as I suppose you've heard."

"No," said Miss Baker, in surprise. "I hadn't heard-I never hear anything

nowadays. How sad!"

"Yes. She died the day before yesterday-and they do say that she's left all her money to that nephew of hers-you remember him, Miss Christabel—he stayed at the Manor two or three years ago - Noel - Noel What's-his-name? - Noel Paunceford."

ISS BAKER did vaguely remember him—recalled a tall, manly, pleasantfaced fellow, his personality notably vivid by comparison with the native inhabitants, whom for some months she had seen in and out of the village—had even (now her memory became more precise) met him, cheerfully incongruous, at a tea-party on the vicar's lawn.

"Really?" she said, feigning a polite

interest.

"Yes. Won't he be surprised out there in Africa! He went out under a bit of a cloud, you know."

"I didn't know."

"Oh, indeed, yes! They do say his aunt paid his passage out. He'd been getting himself mixed up with some girl over Hammingford way. And old Miss Anderson came down on them all like a ton of bricks."

"And did the girl go with him?"

"Lord, no! And a good thing. It came out, after he had gone, that she wasn't any better than she ought to have been——"
Mrs. Harrison stopped abruptly. As she said afterwards to the cook, she could have bitten off her tongue.

Little Miss Baker, however, appeared innocently unaware of how nearly she was

"And what happened to her?"

The housekeeper lifted her broad shoulders. "No one seems to know. She and her baby haven't been seen for a long time. Some do say she went to London."

The messengers of the gods come in strange and unexpected shapes. Little Miss Baker stared speechlessly at familiar Mrs. Harrison. Noel—Noel Paunceford! she saw again the scrap of paper pinned to the baby's shawl—"His name is Noel" saw that girl running towards the London train. And the train from which she had descended had come from Hammingford! She got her voice, forced it to steadiness.

"When—when was that?" she asked.

"It was-why, let me see, it must have been just about the time you came back, Miss Christabel. Of course it was! I remember now. People were saying in the village-" She stopped abruptly once more; had very nearly gone on to the disaster of "it never rains but it pours." She changed the subject, for safety. I suppose we shall be seeing Mr. Paunceford back again in the village now his aunt's left him her property. Funny, isn't it?—that his name should be Noel, the same as baby's -the little darling!"

She bent to chuck him under the chin, and Master Noel turned away his head rebelliously. Mrs. Harrison was all very well when that delightful, closely-intimate person, at whose fair hair he might unreprovedly tug, who to him in every way was all that mother ever is to the child-soul, was not available. He had been waiting patiently, with eyes that turned from one to the other in attempted penetration of their mysterious speech, for this interminable conversation to finish. He could wait no longer. It was time for that game to be resumed.

"Pig-ig!" he said, pulling at his playmate's arm. "Pig-ig!"

Little Miss Baker did not, for the moment, hear him. Her head was in a whirl. Noel -Noel Paunceford! - that was the name which should have been written in the vicar's great book! The housekeeper's large presence, as she vainly tried to cajole a smile from the child, was an oppression. She brought her mind back for a pretext to rid herself of it. She must be alone—think!

"Isn't cook waiting for those raspberries,

Mrs. Harrison?"

The old woman drew herself erect, waddled off with a sniff-she despised jealousy! Little Miss Baker sat nursing the child, thinking—thinking. Noel Paunceford—and that girl in London!

The child tugged at her.

"Pig-ig! Mahtit!—Pig-ig!—Mummy!— P'ease ! " He reiterated the new word in a pride of achievement. "Mummy! Pig-ig!
—Mummy!—P'ease!"

She looked at him, clutched him close.



"Now Mummy catch me!" he

excited laugh of discovery.
"Mummy!"
She surrendered to his seizure of her skirts, substituted her hands into his warm-fingered grasp.

cautiously, stealthily peering, round the bush, ran to her suddenly in a happy,

"Caught!" she confessed, laughingly, breathless still after her last run. "Clever Noel!"

"Now Mummy catch me!" he demanded, imperiously. "Noel hide!"



demanded, imperiously. "Noel hide!"

And hide he did, while, suffering from an extraordinary sudden short-sightedness which failed to perceive a pair of shiningbright eyes glistening at her through the leaves, and a sense of hearing that was deaf to explosive little splutters of mirth from a little face red with its tremendous effort of suppression, she searched for him with a futile, hurrying diligence that passed into high alarm.

"Dear me! Where has that boy got to?
—I must have lost him!—Noel! Noel!—
No!—he isn't here!—he isn't there!—What
a terrible thing!—I can't find him anywhere. I must have lost him—I must have
lost him for ever and ever! Oh, dear me,

what shall I do ?—I've lost—quite lost—my little Noel !-No use looking any more. He isn't there. The only thing to do is to sit down and cry-I shall never see him any more!"

And she sat down on the grass, produced

her pocket-handkerchief.

He came running out at her, in a mingled exuberant delight at his own cleverness in concealment and genuine compassion for her realistic handkerchief-mopped tears. For a moment he had had a delicious little thrill of fear that he really was lost.

"Mummy! Mummy darling! Here I am! Here's Noel!—I'm not lost—I'm not—weally!"

But she continued to sob into her handkerchief, deaf to his assertions.

"I've lost him !—I've lost my little Noel!

-Oh, whatever shall I do?"

He pulled the handkerchief away from her face, snuggled himself into her arms, looked up at her, spoke in serious concern for her.

"Mummy! — Mummy darling! Don't cwy!-Here I am! I'm not lost-I'm not -weally-weally-weally !-- I won't ever get lost fwom you, Mummy—not ever—ever!" He was emphatic.

She dropped her handkerchief, revealed

a face that was radiant.

"You darling!" she whispered to him, as she hugged him close. "Promise me Promise me you won't ever get lost from me!"

"I won't ever get lost fwom you, Mummy!" He pledged himself with all

the seriousness in the world.

"It would kill Mummy—break Mummy's heart into little tiny pieces if you were, darling," she said, kissing him, with a gulp of fondness in her throat. The makebelieve had, childlike, almost been real to

her.
"Were you weally fwightened, Mummy?" he asked.

"Really frightened!" she assured him.

"Then we won't play that game any more," he announced, magnanimously.

Tell me a storwy, Mummy."

"Mind Mummy's dress, then, with your dirty shoes, and I will," she answered. That dress, surprisingly piquant to be seen on little Miss Baker, was symbolical of much. She had one day in the village, as the two Miss Collins from the Grange had passed her in all the summery elegance of Londonmade muslin frocks, suddenly realized that she was a dowd. And it would never do for Noel's mother to be a dowd! She wanted him to grow up loving her, admiring her, never ashamed of her—as she had read in a book that boys at school (and Noel would some day have to go to school) were sometimes ashamed of their dowdily-dressed

mothers. She could not start the reform too early. And the very next day little Miss Baker might have been seen, in a pathetic despair with herself, studying the pages of Vogue as she had never studied anything in her life. The results had stirred the village to a renewal of excited, mystified whispers. "That Miss Baker—

The child settled himself down beside her.

"Tell me a storwy, Mummy!" She thought a moment.

"An old one—or a new one?"

Master Noel pondered. Old stories were very good; it was splendid to know just what was coming, to savour the thrill in advance, to interject—before Mummy had time to pronounce them—the vital words, "All the better to eat you with, my dear!" New stories were equally splendid as Mummy told them—one got tremendously excited wondering what could be going to happen next. The last story had been an old one. He decided.

"A new one, Mummy, please!"

"A new one? Well, wait a minute. I must think of one." He waited, breathless, his eyes fixed on her. She started at random.

"Well, once upon a time there was a princess who lived all by herself in a castle. And every day she looked out of her window to see splendid and handsome fairy princes riding past to call on other princesses who lived in castles close by. But no fairy prince ever called to see this princess."

"Why not, Mummy?"

"Because she was not beautiful like the other princesses were. But she did not mind this. She never expected a fairy prince to call on her. When she was quite a little girl, a funny old fairy godmother had whispered that no prince ever would, so she was not to be disappointed. But what she did want-more, oh, ever so much more than anything else in the world, was a little baby all for her very own-a baby just like you."

'Like me, Mummy?"

"Just like you. And so she decided to go wandering all over the wide world to see if she could find one that didn't belong to anyone else." She broke off. The maidservant was coming across the lawn.

"Please, miss, the vicar has called and

brought a gentleman with him."

Little Miss Baker jumped to her feet. The vicar—and a gentleman! All those fears that had been lulled to rest in her-Mr. Noel Paunceford had not returned to the village, given no sign of life—leaped up in a startled awakening. Not since—since she had come back from the Continent had the vicar called on her. The vicar-and a gentleman! What gentleman? She stood,

trembling, unable to formulate a clear thought, gripped in an awful apprehension. Should she—she snatched at a floating straw of an idea—should she say she was out?

Too late! She heard the vicar's mellifluously cheerful voice, saw him emerge, large and imposing, from the white garden doorway of the house. A gentleman was close behind him. She recognized him, with a memory sharpened by instinct—Mr. Noel Paunceford!

She could not speak, could not move as they came across the lawn towards her.

The maid vanished.

"Ah, Miss Baker!" said the vicar, smiling in that way of his which overbore reluctance in his interlocutor, "we are fortunate. Allow me to introduce—" He turned, with a wave of his white hand, to the tall, bronzed, almost awesomely goodlooking man, performed the ceremony. It was, she needed no telling, Mr. Paunceford. "May we sit down somewhere, Miss Baker?" he continued, frightening her with his imposing cheerfulness. "There is—er—a little matter we want to discuss with you."

Speechlessly, she led the way to some garden seats. They sat down, and the child hid his face from the strangers against her

skirts.

"The little fellow is shy," said Mr.

Paunceford, awkwardly.

The vicar, smoothly authoritative, took hold of him, patted his curly head, turned him round to visibility, raised his eyebrows interrogatively.

"I think it is," remarked Mr. Paunceford.

"There is certainly a resemblance."

Little Miss Baker waited like a victim in the Inquisition, unable to utter a sound.

The vicar turned to her.

"Miss Baker, do you remember my asking you a question in a train a little more than two years ago? Will you—ah—forgive me if I ask you the same question again? Whose child is that?"

The colour rushed up into Miss Baker's face, ebbed, left her deathly white. She could not utter more than one difficult

monosyllable.

" Mine."

She steeled herself to face the vicar's sharply penetrative eyes. To her simple soul, schooled from childhood in an unquestioned faith, he was awesome in all he symbolized. She faced him as she would have faced the Judgment Seat. He spoke gravely, but not unkindly, shaking his head, a look in his eye she could not quite gauge.

"Miss Baker, your sin has found you out. It is useless to persist in it. You found that child in the train just before I met you.

We have traced it all out."

She sat speechless.

"' Thou shalt not steal,' Miss Baker." A cry broke from her deathly pallor.

"I can't give him up!"

The child looked up at her from her skirts, in concern at her dimly apprehended trouble.

"Mummy!"

The vicar rose from his seat.

"Miss Baker, it is not for me to dictate what must be done. I am going to leave you with Mr. Paunceford. Between you, you can discuss it." He held out his hand. "For myself, I will only say this. You have made me feel ashamed."

She stared at him blankly, watched him

go across the lawn.

She was left alone with that bronzed, handsome man, who fidgeted awkwardly in his chair. Neither of them spoke. The child hid himself in her skirts; then, emboldened, half turned to glance shyly at the stranger. Noel Paunceford reached out a hand for him, drew him close, looked into his blue eyes, put a kiss upon his mop of golden curls. Miss Baker quivered.

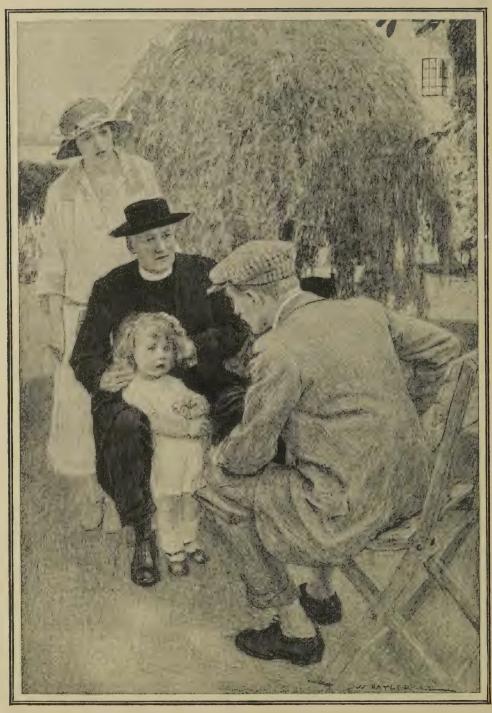
The man spoke.

"I suppose I had better tell you the story," he said. "I owe it to you—and much besides."

She made herself answer.

"As you wish."

I E told her the story, succinctly, without parade of personal feelings—a story of a secret marriage, made in defiance of the relative of whom he was the heir, the marriage of a penniless demobilized officer who could find no work. He told her of his aunt's wrath when he confessed it; of her proposal, accepted after desperate reluctance, that he should go out to Africaalone—at her expense, to build up a livelihood and a home. He told her of the diabolic condition of that proposal (she was furious in her hate and scorn of his timid little girl-wife, a shopkeeper's daughter), that the marriage should still be kept secret and that for a year they should be on their honour not to communicate with each other, except through her. Those many letters, full of the agony of inexplicable silences, of the torture of unresolved doubts, from him and from that girl-wife he had found, when he had returned (and, far away upcountry in an unsettled part of Africa, it had been many months before the news of his aunt's death had reached him), in Miss Anderson's drawer. To him, Miss Anderson had written—"but what could you expect, Noel, from a girl of that sort?"—that his wife had fled, not to be traced, with another man. (It was in the anguish of these tidings that he had gone up-country to lose himself in the wilds.) To her, he knew not



The vicar took hold of him, patted his curly head, turned him round. "There is certainly a resemblance," said Mr. Paunceford.

what she had said—something that drove

her to despair.

"Some women," he finished, "though I don't like to say it-can be very wicked,

"Yes," she assented, meekly, a selfconscious flush stealing into her face.

There was again an awkward silence.

"And your wife?" she forced herself to

"She died in London—a year ago." He looked down at the child, still between his knees. "This is all that is left to me."

She made a movement with her lips, but

no sound came.

"Miss Baker," he said, very seriously, "the vicar has told me everything. have been his real mother."

"Don't / " The protest came strangled in

her throat.

"I can't snatch him away from you like

She stared at him, rushing waters surging in her ears, her sight useless in a sudden trouble of her eyes, her heart tumultuous.

He paused.

"Miss Baker, I am a lonely man. If I left him with you, would you let me come and see him often—very often? perhaps one day—when you have learned to know me better-you would let me tell you something of the great—the very great admiration the vicar's story has made me feel for you—the admiration of a very poor sort of fellow for a woman of very rare and beautiful goodness."

He stood up, patted the child upon the

"Good-bye, little Noel—for a time. Is it a bargain, Miss Baker?"

She looked into his honest, handsome face, tried to speak, and failed. She wanted to throw herself at his feet in overwhelming gratitude.

He took her hand, held it with his firm

"I know it is," he smiled at her. "Au revoir, then, Miss Baker."

She watched him go across the lawn, disappear. She was alone with the child.

"Mummy," he said, tugging at her. "Mummy, I want to hear that storwy. Mummy!— Mummy cwying, Mummy?" dear! — Why you

She came down to him, clasping him passionately, smiling at him through her

rush of tears.

"Noel! Noel darling! Mummy thinks that story was all wrong! We—perhaps we'll begin another one."

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 130. (The Second of the Series.)

THE winter of our discontent is past;
The first is here, with promise of the last.

- 'Tis on the river, therefore should be clean, Though, judged by sound, discoloured spots are seen.
- 2. Strange is this liar; half a word we view; Mix up the letters would you find the hue.
- 3. Take one of twelve, a butter you will find, Which, with a rod, a charger brings to mind.
- 4. The fruit was given, peace to war gave place, Burnt were the topmost towers by Beauty's face.
- 5. One letter, then it must be many more; Nevertheless, it must be letters four.
- 6. White-feathered one, he wandered manywheres, Not only up, but also down the stairs.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 130 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, The Strand Madazine, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on May 10th. To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it

should be written at the side. At the foot of his ans ver every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 129.

If flowers may their seasons represent, Winter and spring should here be evident.

- 1. Between the cup and lip this may occur.
- 2. The month when fogs oppress the Londoner.
- 3. Rising, the east. Write only half the word.
- 4. It turns at last, caught by the early bird.
- 5. Golf club, or player, offers you a ride.
- 6. In Shakespeare's play, he and his lady died. 7. Horrible monster, eight-armed cuttlefish.

8. September brings the bird—a welcome dish.

1. S	li	P
2. N	ovembe	R
3. O	r	I
4. W	or	M
5. D	rive	R
6. R	o m e	0
7. 0	ctopu	S
8. P	artridg	E

PAX.

Note.-Light 3. Orient.

THE HUMOURS OF DANCING

Fenn Sherie

O the modern youth and maiden mankind appears to be divided into two categories—those who dance and those who criticize dancing. Each section is apt to regard the other with mild disapproval, and it is only when the humorists present an impartial view of them both that we realize the value of laughter as an antidote to misunderstanding. To whichever section we belong



SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE PARTNER WHO WON'T KEEP STEP.

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

A BALL-ROOM NECESSITY.

The periscope attachment for partners of ill-assorted heights.

By permission of "London Opinion."

we cannot fail to appreciate the humour of those who satirize dancing and its critics, and we must be grateful to them for enabling us not only to see ourselves as others see us, but to see others as we ought to see them.

When those energetic bodies who write to the Press signing themselves "Paterfamilias" or "Disgusted" indite their protests against the manner in which certain young ladies deport themselves in the ball-room, indignation arises on both sides. But the kindly humorist takes the milder view, and pours oil



THE DANCING LESSON.

Exasperated Wife: "My dear man, you learnt to drill in the Army; why can't you pick this up? Anyone would think you were mentally deficient."

Husband: "Almost the sergeant's own words, dear."

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unable to distinguish between individuality and selfishness. If people like to be eccentric and dance against the rhythm of the music, as many of the up-to-date dancers do, nobody wishes to interfere with them. We are content to watch them with mild amusement, and reflect how true to life is the story of the young dancing man who said to his partner, "I say, old thing, shall we one-step or fox-trot this waltz?" But those who slither about the room in all directions and collide with other couples in their attempt to display their originality only succeed in causing general annoyance. As a wit was once overheard to remark, "They are all right in their way—but not in other people's."

It may not, perhaps, be generally realized that, although the great revolutionary change from the old-fashioned dances to "jazz" took place during the war, there have been still further changes in "jazz" itself during the past few years. The noisy and cacophonous negro bands have been superseded by those who mingle sweetness with syncopation and humour with harmony. The ugly movements of the "bunny hug" and "shimmy shake" have given place to the more decorous steps of the "blues," and the waltz—with modern variations—has returned to popularity.

There was a story told during the "cymbal and trombone" era of a nigger performer in a jazz band who, at the end of

on the troubled waters by suggesting that the poor girl may be "more danced against than dancing." The truth is that Miss 1924 is not so bad as she is painted—painted though she may be.

The next thing that the humorist teaches us is that the languid walk and the casual gliding movement which devotees of Terpsichore are pleased to call the one-step and the foxtrot are far more difficult than they look. They take a lot of learning. Indeed, it may be said that the modern dance is a paradox—in the first place it is not a dance, and by the time you have learned it, it is no longer modern. It has, however, certain advantages over the old-fashioned figure and set dances, in that every couple is free to perform whatever movements it happens to prefer. Of course there are-and always will be-dancers who go to extremes in this respect, being



THE SUPER-STUNTERS.

By permission of "The Sketch."

The Humours of Dancing

a dance, laid down his trombone and remarked to the conductor: "Say, bo, they sure enjoyed that 'Farmyard Fun' we just played."

"'Farmyard Fun'?" exclaimed the leader. "Why, that's the next item—we ain't played that

"Oh," answered the other. "Jest fancy—I've been playing it all the time."



Dutiful Son of the House (who has been told off to ask a Wallflower to dance): "I say, how shall we—I mean, how do people usually hold you?"

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DEDICATED TO "CHERUBS" UP ALOFT!
One man's floor is another man's ceiling.

By permission of "The Sketch."

A more recent story is that of the dancer who approached the leader of a syncopated orchestra and said: "I say, do you know that thing that goes 'Zammy zammy zammy zim zig zag'?"

my zammy zim zim zig zag'?"
"Can't say I do," replied the musician.
"What's the name of it?"

"That is the name," was the reply.

Now that eccentricity in the ball-room is the exception rather than the rule, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction, and the humorist is beginning to aim his shafts of wit at the lack of energy and the utter boredom affected by the dancers of to-day. He shows us that they take their dancing as they do their tennis or their golf - with contemplative seriousness. They regard it as an exercise or as an art, according to their temperaments, and, despite what the kill-joys may say, the ball-room is no longer regarded as the ideal setting for a mild flirtation. Dancing partners are selected, not for their personal charm, but for their skill as dancers. Terpsi-



TO MEET THE SHORTAGE OF DANCING MEN.



THE SERVANTS' BALL.

Groom (somewhat heated): "Care for a breather my lady?"

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The Humours of Dancing

chore and Cupid are as a rule kept in water - tight compartments.

Relevant to this is an anecdote which tells of a hostess at a house party who found her daughter sitting out on the stairs with a young man.

"Why is it that you are not dancing, dear?" she asked.

"I can't, mother," was the reply. "My dancing partner hasn't turned up. This is only my sitting-out partner."

And, as a reflection upon the attitude of the ultra-modern youth to his fair partners, there is the story of the languid young



HINTS TO HOSTESSES: HOW TO DEAL WITH INCORRIGIBLE SITTERS-OUT.

Install a moving staircase which you can operate at your discretion.

man who was found lolling in an arm-chair airing his views to several youngsters of his own age.

"What do you think is the best way to hold a girl?" asked one. "Oh," replied

"Oh," replied the tired one, "I don't hold them, you know—I just let 'em nestle."

The humorists have not overlooked the popular craze for tea andsupperdances as a subject for their fun. There is a ring of truth in the story of the lady at the "sou-per dansant" who, when claimed by her partner for a dance, replied: "I'm so tired. Do you mind if we eat this out?" and a clever touch of



The advantage of the winding frock is that it can be secured by a single pin—so long as the pin remains.

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satire is provided by that of the restless young lady who took leave of her hostess at the comparatively early hour of three a.m. "What-going already?" asked the hostess. "Yes, dear, I must," NO WINE BEER, OR SPIRITS SERVED AFTER 10 PM. PITIFUL POSITION OF A GENTLEMAN WHO WENT TO A SUBSCRIPTION FANCY DRESS BALL AS THE BLACK PRINCE.

By permission of "The Humorist" replied the other. "I'm rather tired, and I've



got to be up early for a déjeuner dansant."

Nervous Pierrot (just introduced): "I say, I—I've only been dancing a fortnight, so you will forgive me if I step on your frock or anything—won't you?"

By permission of "The Bystander." Vol. lxvii.-36.

never-failing topic of the bad dancer, which has given rise to innumerable anecdotes. A classic among these is that of the gallant but slightly deaf gentleman who approached an obese "wallflower" sitting alone in a corner and asked her for a dance.

"Thank you very much," she said, "but

I'm afraid I am danced out."
"Oh, no," was the reply. "Not darned

stout—just pleasantly plump."
Equally amusing, if less polite, is the

story of the compliment that failed. "You dance divinely," said the young

man to his partner.
"Thanks," replied the girl, somewhat cattily. "I'm sorry I can't return the compliment."

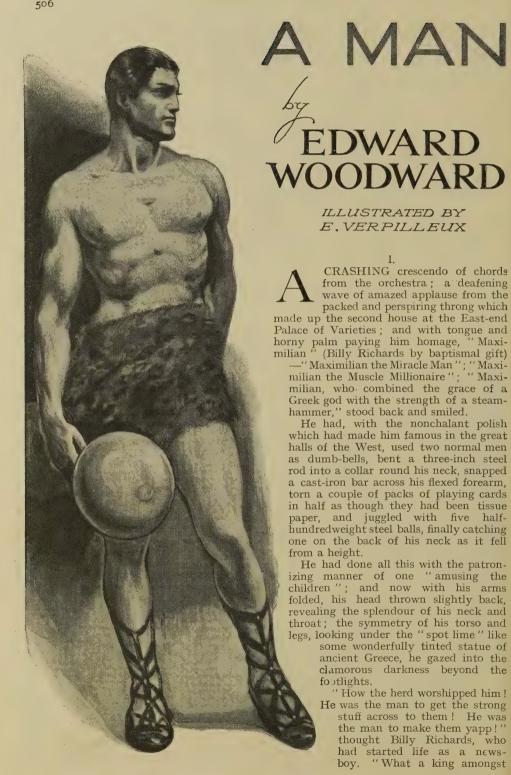
"Oh," replied the young man, un-abashed, "you could—if you were as big a liar as I am."

Perhaps the neatest witticism of all, which expresses the unspoken thoughts of most women who have suffered the martyrdom of dancing with a clumsy partner, is the following.

The particularly gawky man was endeavouring to open up a little smalltalk with his fair partner.

"What do you think of the floor?" he asked.

"Rather nice," was the reply. "Try it when you are tired of my feet.



AND A MOUSE

commoners! What a lion amongst the

other denizens of the city jungle!"

He had feared he might lose caste, coming to this little suburban hall during a period of slackness. But now he knew this applause was worth any risk he had taken: it went to his head, and he loved it as other men do wine; and, stepping forward, he made his bow. He had studied and practised that bow as assiduously as he had any other of his "stunts"; and, perfected, it seemed somehow, not at all clearly to Billy Richards' limited intellect, to crystallize his achievements, his rise from news-lad to docker, from docker to strong man at a circus, and thence by hard paths to his present supremacy, into one marvellous moment of monarchy.

With a hand-spring he left the stage, and fetched up in the wings in front of Mallox, the paunchy and black-avised

manager of the hall.

"Lord, how they eat you!" said Mallox, with a faintly veiled sneer in his voice. "They're for brawn rather than brain every time!"

Bemused by vainglory, Richards missed the disparagement in the manager's Almost humorously he swelled words.

out his chest and laughed.

"That's right," he answered. "I guess they'll be making pilgrimages to my resting-place when I pass out."

"Do you?" grinned Mallox. "Then you've another guess coming. They'll forget you long before you're dead. You're just in the fashion now. until you begin to crack, or get hurt, and they'll give you 'the bird,' same as they gave it to 'Bang' Thomas, your man.

"Don't you kid yourself," returned Richards, getting into his purple silk dressing-gown. "Thomas never had balance. He got swelled head, and drank himself off the boards. I gave him the job as my assistant out of pity, and wish I hadn't. Even as my handy man he's getting too big for his

Mallox chuckled, and puffed at his cigar. Almost unconsciously his eyes went to Richards' sandalled feet.

"You take a fair size in footwear yourself, don't you?" he murmured.
"But they don't pinch," replied the great "Maximilian," moving off towards his dressing-room. "I don't drink and 1

don't smoke; and if you know of a man who can do my turn better than I can, you'd better get him."

"Aw, cut it out!" snapped Mallox. "I ain't a worshipper of idols myself, and you'll catch a chill if you hang about like that, even if you do fancy yourself a god."

Reaching his dressing-room, Richards saw his man, "Bang" Thomas, stowing away his stage paraphernalia; saw that, as usual, he was half fuddled; and with a smile on his lips strode across to the full-length



mirror, shed his dressing-gown, and flexed his great biceps and deltoids; half turned on heel and toe and, bringing his clenched fists backwards, regarded the undulating might of his massive back; turned this way and that, dead to everything but the worship

of his own wonderful body.

What cared he that Mallox and the theatre staff called him "The Swanker"? He had a right to swank if anyone had! What cared he that his drink-sodden assistant, "Bang" Thomas, a one-time strong man, regarded him with sullen animosity? That dead-beat had lifted the spirit flask so often that he couldn't lift a real weight once; whereas he, "Maximilian the Marvellous," was supreme in his line.

Getting out of his leopard-skin loincovering, rubbing down, and dressing for the street, Richards mentally attributed to himself all credit for possessing the frame he did, and turned intolerantly on "Bang" Thomas when the fuddled handy-man allowed

one of the heavy steel balls to fall.

"Lord!" he shot out disdainfully, watching Thomas sway into a stooping position to retrieve the fallen weight. "It makes me giddy to watch you! You'll have to let up on the fire-water, else you'll find

yourself out of a job."

Thomas looked up, his eyes narrow slits of fuddled anger. He had always regarded Richards as a usurper; but now, with his brain inflamed with raw spirit, with the thunder of applause that "Maximilian" had aroused still ringing in his ears, venomous

hate gripped his tattered soul.

"Who are you abusing?" he grunted. For a moment he stood bent, his once massive form sagging, his arms, once the envy of other strong men, hanging ape-like, limp and flabby, in front of him. His heavy brows were bunched above half-vacant, halfferocious animal-like eyes. "You think as you're the whole world because you've got a bit of strength; but you wait! Some day it'll go, and then-

"That's enough," cut in Richards, as the sot before him voiced the dread of all strong

Thomas chuckled; his laugh was a threat. "Oh, no, it ain't enough," he sniggered. "I've had a fill-up of your airs of late, and now you've got to listen to me-me, who was getting the strong-man stunt across whilst you was still sucking a bottle."

Stow it!" snapped Richards, rising to his feet. "It's you who suck a bottle now; that's the difference. If you don't want to take orders from me, you can hop it."

With a shambling gait Thomas came up to his employer, an insane fury leering from his eyes, his fists clenched, his head bent, his whole attitude one of menace.

" You firing me?" he gritted.

For a tense second Richards made no reply. He was loath to fire this poor devil into the ranks of the unemployed; but he could take him on again afterwards, and a jolt would maybe do him good.

beat ain't any good to me." snarled Thomas, and, swinging back one of his fists, he levelled a blow at Richards' head.

Just in time "Maximilian" ducked his Greek profile out of harm's way; and the next second, as Thomas, carried off his drunken balance by the swing of the blow, tottered forward, he caught him by the scruff of the neck and the seat of his breeches, hoisted him off his feet, and, carrying him to the door, pitched him out on to the landing.

Thomas lay still, breathing heavily; and with a grin Richards turned, switched out the dressing-room light, locked the door, and strolled down the stone stairs to the exit. That was the way "Maximilian dealt with truculent servants! although Thomas, rousing himself, yelled a threat after him: "Cripes! You shall pay for this!" he approached the stage-doorkeeper's office with a self-satisfied smile.

Mike," he said to the man in the little glass cupboard, "I've fired that dead-beat, Bang' Thomas. He's lying upstairs on the landing in a booze-trance.

Mike O'Tool nodded his head.

"He's bin asking for it for some time, Mr. Richards," he said. "But I'm sorry for the chap."

"So am I," agreed Richards. "I've stood his drinking for some time; but he's getting dangerous now, and I'm through. Here's my key; hang it on its hook, and if he asks for it don't let him have it. And here's his wages and a bit for luck; give the dibs to him to-morrow when he's sober."

He handed the doorkeeper a wad of notes, and with a cheery "Good night" stepped out into the dark side-street.

IPPER ALLEY, the thoroughfare which runs up alongside the East-end Palace, is an unsavoury spot at any period of the twenty-four hours; but as "Maximilian" stepped from the stage door it was at its worst. The pale gleam of light which came from the theatre only served to reveal the neglect of the city scavengers, and the dilapidation which rain and wind had caused to the posters on the hoarding across the way.

A bitter, blood-freezing east wind swept up from the broader street which ran at right-angles to the left, eddying torn and discarded programmes, straw, and grit;

and, raising his coat-collar, Richards had taken one stride to the left when his leg came into violent contact with something soft and yielding.

At the same time a gasp came from the darkness at his feet, and something black rolled into the gutter.

Startled, Richards halted.

"What the blazes?" he commenced, and then stopped short, for the black thing which his leg had sent hurtling into the

gutter materialized into a being!

Peering into the gloom, increased rather than lighted by the dim shaft from the stage door, "Maximilian the Superman" beheld rise up before him as monstrous a dwarf as ever parodied the form of man! crooked, stunted caricature of the lords of the animal kingdom, which cringed before the perfect specimen of his race, like a horrible reflection in a bent mirror.

"Heavens!" gasped Richards. "And who the blazes are you?" Almost unconsciously he drew himself to his full magnificent height, swelled out his massive chest, and lauded himself for being as he "What in thunder is your name?"

The dwarf looked up, a crucified smile

appearing on his large grey-white face.
"Hercules, guv'nor," croaked he. "When me dad knowed I was going to be a dwarf, he had me christened Hercules, so as I'd be able to make folk laugh an' earn a living

that way.'

Some fund of hidden sympathy stirred in "Maximilian" as he listened to that crushed voice. Some recollection of his own early struggles with hardship and want made him momentarily humble; but the next second the old arrogance assailed him again. What a wonderful contrast was here! Himself, perfection; the dwarf, parody! Instinctively he struck an attitude, and spoke in a patronizing voice.

"Hercules, eh?" he chuckled. he didn't call you Adonis whilst he was at

it. What d'you do for a living?"

The dwarf shivered in the cutting wind,

and stamped one stunted leg.

"What can a bloke made in the way I am do, guv'nor?" he asked, dragging his tattered coat about him.

"Well, what are you doing here, anyway? Who're you waiting for?" inquired Richards.

" You!"

Speaking, the dwarf peered up into the Superman's face hungrily; something almost akin to adoration in his eyes. "I seed your picture on the hoardings, and come to have a look at you in the flesh. I couldn't afford to have three-penn'orth in the 'gods,' but I guessed I'd catch you comin' out if I waited long enough! I wanted to see what I might have been like if I hadn't been as I am.

A warm wave of self-complacency flooded through "Maximilian the Miracle Man." At that moment he felt himself more than ever a god whom ordinary mortals worshipped.

What good does seeing me do you?" he asked, eager for more praise, even from

the dwarf's humble lips.

"As much good as a famished kid gets from squashing his nose against a bun-shop window." Abruptly the dwarf broke off and gave utterance to the abortion of a laugh. "What a picture you and me must look at this minute; you so big and mighty. me a perishin' gargoyle, chatting as familiar as ever was: 'Maximilian' and Hercules Spicer: the long and the short of it!"

Into Richards' vainglorious brain those words shot like flame. What an idea! What a brain-wave for a Press stunt! This dwarf's warped frame would give his own magnificent physique an added wonder! But they would have to be connected in some way. How? And then came the idea. As his servant, in place of "Bang" Thomas! It almost looked as though poor Thomas's actions had been dictated by Fate. Abruptly he decided.

"If you want a job I can give you one," he said. "I'll give you a trial as my servant; and you'll have to be seen about with me.

The dwarf took a shambling step forward, and touched "Maximilian" with a grimy, talon-like hand.

"Am I hearing you right?" he quavered. "Yes," said "Maximilian," in the tone of a Nero granting the boon of life to a vanquished gladiator. "I have need of you—follow me to my lodgings."

With that he turned on his heel, and with a sort of shuffling trot Hercules Spicer

followed at his heels.

A quarter of an hour later the two stood in the sitting-room of Richards' lodgings.

"Lord!" gasped Hercules, gazing round, and then grinning up at the wondrous "Maximilian." "All the way here I've bin wondering what you wanted with me; I've just tumbled to it. I'm to be the contrast! The advertisement to show what a great fine figure of a man you are.'

That's right," said "Maximilian," "but you've got to be my servant as well."

"Lummy!" breathed Hercules, in an awe-inspired voice. "Fancy me being gentleman's gentleman to a giant!"

II.

THE next twenty hours was to "Maximilian" a period of interested satisfaction, and to Hercules Spicer one of amazed delight in his own good fortune.

Providence having endowed the dwarf with a quick and adaptable brain, he readily picked up the rudiments of his new duties; and a theatrical tailor, accustomed to making the best of what the Lord sent him in the way of figures, fitted him out of stock with raiment which in its very conspicuous restraint called attention to the stunted figure of the servant, thereby throwing into bold relief the godlike stature of the master.

Together they walked from lodgings to theatre; "Maximilian" with a haughty, swaggering stride; Hercules with a sort of waddling shuffle. It was a wondrous advertisement for the "Muscle Millionaire."

But at the theatre there was trouble from the start. Much to "Maximilian's" annoyance, Mallox, on hearing of "Bang" Thomas's dismissal, had championed the dead-beat and taken him on as a sceneshifter and property man, which, whilst being a job, was a very much harder one than that of servant to a pampered "star turn," and one which Thomas had no intention of putting up with without having a shot at regaining his old billet. appearance of the dwarf therefore infuriated him; and just as the "second house" was commencing on the evening following his dismissal, he went to "Maximilian's dressing-room and asked for his job back.

Hercules was busy getting the paraphernalia ready for his master's second "turn"; and, knowing facts, looked up with a grin as "Bang" entered and voiced his sup-plication to "Maximilian." It was joy to him to know that he, a dwarf, had beaten

a man of normal stature.

"Sorry, 'Bang,'" said "Maximilian," after hearing his ex-servant's appeal, "but I have a chap now who suits me better than you ever did. What's more, he's a 'dry bone,' and I have the comfort of knowing that my life don't hang on the strength of the dope in your pocket flask. There's nothing doing."

"Meantersay you won't gimme another chance? "growled Thomas, angrily. "Meantersay you're satisfied with a freak to look after you?" He paused and cackled. "Huh! I guess I see the idea; it makes you feel that much bigger to have a mouse like 'im crawling round yer! Criky, Mr. Umpty Dumpty, you ain't 'arf going to get a fall one of these days!"

'Maximilian' rose to his feet angrily.

"Get outside!" he commanded, threateningly, and although, mindful of his previous ejectment, Thomas obeyed with alacrity, there was a demon of malice in his eyes as he left the room.

Hercules had paused in his work during the altercation, and now, catching his expression, "Maximilian" chuckled.

"Take no notice of him," he said. "He's like the dope he uses, all fumes. If you've done polishing the sweat off those weights you can come along into the wings and watch the show."

AGERLY the dwarf followed his hero out to the fringe of the stars to the fringe of the stage, and for a space watched Lupo, the funny man, at the business of getting a laugh out of a stolid audience who had come to see a strong man, and were impatient for his appearance:

"Maximilian" watched with tolerant interest; Hercules with wonder and cackling joy. The dwarf loved a funny man of the red-nosed, splay-footed variety; somehow it lessened the consciousness of his own affliction; and so absorbed were both "Maximilian" and he in the "turn," that neither noticed the vulpine eyes of "Bang" Thomas watching them across the stage from the prompt side.

For a second the ex-strong man gazed at his late employer and the usurper of his job; then a cunning leer came into his eyes, and silently he slipped away. Fate had played into his hands, and if he were quick he could have his revenge that very night.

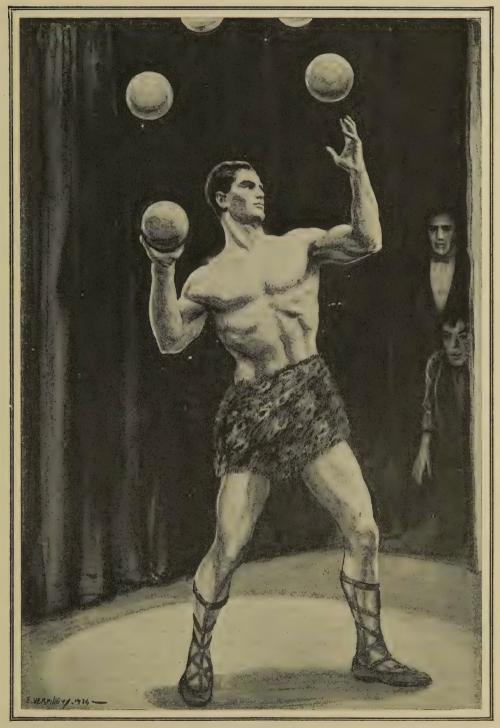
Making his way to the store-room, he caught up a bit of cotton waste, soaked it with oil, and hurried off to "Maximilian's" dressing-room, which, as he had seen both the strong man and the dwarf in the wings, he knew would be unoccupied. Owing to the fact that he had been a strong man himself, he knew the death-dealing danger of misplaced oil in the paraphernalia of might, and, entering the dressing-room, he took up one of the half-hundredweight balls, one with a peculiar flattening on one side, and smeared it over with the oily rag. Then, with an evil chuckle, he replaced it in its gilt-pillared portable rack, and crept out of the room.

'Ambulance will be needed at half-past

ten, I should think," he sniggered.

Ten minutes later the great "Maximilian" strolled on to the stage in all his glory. The spot lime which shone on him showed his velvet skin dead-white against the tawn and black of his leopard-skin girdle; and as the thunder of applause rippled and banged at his appearance the little dwarf in the wings thrilled as though the pæans were for him.

The plaudits apparently left "Maximilian" unmoved. He regarded them as his right. He was a god to these people; and it was as well they realized it. Of his gracious condescension he entertained them, and whilst the orchestra played their minor notes, whilst Hercules in the wings held his breath with trembling admiration and worship, he went through his repertoire,



One by one "Maximilian the Marvellous" took up the steel spheres and tossed them into the air as though they were no heavier than tinfoil-covered wood.

until at a signal from him the band stopped abruptly, and two stage-hands brought forward the rack holding the five half-

hundredweight steel spheres.
With a nonchalant smile "Maximilian" picked up one of the balls and, to show there was no fake, let it fall on to the boards with a shattering bang. A gasp went up from the audience, and the orchestra broke into a waltz.

One by one "Maximilian the Marvellous" took up the steel spheres and tossed them into the air as though they were no heavier than tinfoil-covered wood, and in a minute his head and shoulders became the centre of a whirling, flying mass of weights, each one capable of braining him.

For a time "Maximilian" seemed perfectly happy; but presently the stage-smile left his lips; and whilst his hands flew this way and that, an expression of anxiety crept to his face. One of the balls, the flattened one, was slow to leave his flinging fingers; it upset the rhythm and made him uncertain of the direction of its fall. It was a danger, and he must finish the turn quickly.

At a shout from him the orchestra stopped mid-bar, and up into the air went the slightly flattened ball. With a ball in each hand and one in the crook of each elbow " Maximilian " braced himself for his crowning feat; and bending his head forward he set himself to catch the fifty-six pounds of

steel in the nape of his neck!

But even as he bent his head, fear seized him; in the act of flinging upwards the ball had slipped in his fingers, the throw had not been true; what would the fall be?

That instant seemed hours to "Maxi-

milian "; and then-crash!

A terrible, devastating jar shook the strong man's mighty body, every bone in his frame seemed to bend and crack, as falling out of line the weight smashed down on to his spine just below his shoulderblades; and with a startled, sobbing groan "Maximilian the Miracle Man" pitched forward, face downwards, on the boards.

With a terror-born oath Hercules fled from the wings to the stage as his hero fell; and before Mallox or any of the stage-hands could reach him, the dwarf was down on his

knees by the fallen giant's side.

"Big 'un!" he gasped, "are you hurt bad?'

A mighty sobbing sigh came from "Maximilian.

"Don't move me," he groaned. "My back's broken. You never burnished the sweat off the flattened ball; it didn't fall

"D'yer mean this is my doin'?" cried Hercules.

"Yes, curse you," moaned "Maximilian." And in the wings, as Mallox gestured the curtain down and the audience buzzed with sympathetic conjecture, "Bang" Thomas

"The perishin' lion is down now all right!" he muttered, and slunk away to have a pull at his flask. "It's astonishing

what a drop of oil will do!"

AXIMILIAN'S " back was not broken; his spine was intact; but every nerve had been jarred and jolted into a state of atrophy, condemning the Superman who had strutted and posed as a god of vital strength; who had walked the streets with the mien of a monarch; who had hired a dwarf so that the pygmy's misshapen limbs might, by contrast, give his own frame an additional glory in the eyes of man, to a future spent on an invalid couch and full-length push-chair.

At first, after the doctor had suggested by shrugs and gestures the half-truth, which is worse in its uncertainty than the whole, "Maximilian" refused to believe that Fate had dealt him so cruel a blow. He felt like a stricken king to whom news of the apostasy of his army has been brought. Desperately he clung to the belief that his kingdom, the empire of his body, would

remain true, and do his bidding.

But slowly, as weeks went by and he found himself still chained to his bed in the lodgings he had thought to occupy for so brief a time; as stealthily his limbs grew cold and numb; as daily the torture periods of his back increased in duration, he realized the truth.

Believing that it was owing to Hercules' neglect in not burnishing the weight that the accident had happened, never a day passed that he did not pour acid curses of reproach on the dwarf's head; and Hercules took the blame; took it humbly, and with the gentleness of a woman nursed his fallen hero, and disregarded the searing curses which pain, despair, and passion ripped from "Maximilian's" lips.

Then, a month after the accident, when, along with the peeling tattered posters of the out-of-date, "Maximilian the Miracle Man " was slipping from the public's mind, the added horror of failing funds came to the "Muscle Millionaire." He had never saved, but spent recklessly and magnificently; and faced with penury he called Hercules to him with a viciously sardonic laugh.

You've sucked me dry, you stoat!" he snarled, when the dwarf stood by his side. "You pulled me down, and now there's nothing left; it ain't any good you waiting longer—there's nothing more for you to get. I'm for the poor-house, and you must go

hopping on your own again.'

There was an expression of utter agony on Hercules' face as he heard these words; but he said nothing for a moment; then a gleam came into his sombre eyes.

"Meantersay you're broke?" he mur-

mured.

"To the wide," snarled "Maximilian," bitterly.

"Then I guess I'd better get another

ob," said the dwarf.

"Maximilian" gave a derisive chuckle. "I thought you'd see it that way," he

sneered.

"With luck, I could make enough for both of us," added Hercules, disregarding his hero's gibe. "I'd die happy if I could do something big like that for you. God, if only I was a proper-shaped man!"

He turned as he spoke and left the room; and for a space the crumpled Adonis on the

dingy bed felt ashamed of his words.

T was an hour later when Hercules came

to "Maximilian" again.
"I've got a job," he announced. "Mallox, of the East-end Palace has took me on as a stage-hand, 'Bang' Thomas is boozing worse than ever, and Mallox has given me his job."

"A stunted gargoyle like you won't be much good as a stage-hand," sneered "Maximilian." "What's he going to pay

"A couple of quid a week," answered Hercules. "It ain't much; but it'll keep you from the poor-house. Gosh! Fancy from going pauper! It makes me feel good!"

"Well," growled "Maximilian," letting his eyes rest on the misshapen figure by his bedside, "if that ain't the frozen limit!"

He closed his eyes, and Hercules tiptoed from the room.

Each evening for the next week Hercules worked at the theatre. He was supremely happy; happier even than he had been during that brief time when he had been the background for a Monarch of Muscle. He was really serving his hero now. He, a dwarf, was the only bulwark between the great "Maximilian" and starvation; and with zest he flung himself into the business of learning the craft of the power behind the scenes.

And then one evening the unbelievable thing happened. It was half-way through the second house, and alert and eager Hercules was standing in the wings waiting for "Jim Slim," a knockabout comedian, to take the stage. "Jim Slim" had hurt himself

in his previous turn, and Hercules had been instructed to stand by in order to drop the curtain if the funny man showed signs of

collapse.

" Jim Slim" was slow in taking his call; and already the orchestra was marking time for his entry on the stage, when suddenly a shuffling step came behind Hercules, and, turning round, the dwarf gazed into the drink-delirious eyes of "Bang" Thomas.
"So you'm the perisher as 'as took my

job again, are you?" he snarled, swaying threateningly towards the dwarf. ' Doorkeeper said I weren't wanted, as my job had been given to someone else. So I detted him one and come up to see who it was as was robbin' me of my liveli'ood.''
"Push off,'' said Hercules. "I'm busy!"

"Busy, are you?" snarled "Bang"
Thomas. "Not 'arf so blistering busy as you'll be in a minute! I put your high and mighty pal out of business by wiping an oil rag round one of his weights, and

"What! It was you, was it?" gasped Hercules, and forgetful of everything else, unconscious of the fact that Mallox on the prompt side was making feverish signs to him to drop the curtain, so that he might announce to the audience that "Jim Slim" was unable to appear a second time, he flung himself at the ex-strong man.

But drunk and sodden as he was, "Bang" Thomas was more than a match for the dwarf: and with a swing of his right he caught Hercules on the chest and knocked him head over heels, arms and legs flying in a mad windmill of motion, bang on to the

As a funny man's entry before the pleasureseeking public it was a masterpiece of humour; and as Hercules rolled like a shot rabbit to mid-stage, a roar of delighted surprise came from pit, stalls, and dresscircle.

It was simply amazing how these comedians could tumble without hurting them-

selves!

For half a second, dazed and winded, Hercules lay still; and then, hearing the riot of laughter from over the footlights, and realizing where he was, he scrambled dizzily to his feet.

What had been a roar of laughter now became a tumult of ecstatic, joyous, uncon-

trollable delight.

This was a wonderful turn! Who the dickens was this burlesque of a man, who came on to the stage like a human ball, and then stood up on his stunted legs and gazed at the audience in a half-soaked way whilst he rubbed the back of his large head? He was an artist, anyway! Lord, what a freak he looked!

Mallox, seeing what had taken place, had dashed round the rear of the stage and had "Bang" Thomas hauled off; and now, although still in a hopeless fog from his fall, Hercules knew that what was expected of him was to get off that stage as quickly as he could and make room for the great "Jim Slim."

With what he intended to be an apologetic smile, but which appeared to the audience as one of the most humorous grimaces a funny man ever contrived, he essayed to bow as he had seen "Maximilian" bow to a cheering crowd; and immediately fresh gusto came to the laughter of the onlookers.

It rattled poor Hercules, and with a hurried step he tried to "walk-off," but to his horror he found that his ankle was badly sprained, and at the second step he came down again as though he had tripped over his own huge feet!

Laughter swept the stalls and pit,

mounted to the dress-circle and gallery, and crackled round the boxes. Heroically Hercules staggered to his feet again and tried to keep his end up.

"Sorry!" he shouted into the gloom beyond the footlights. "But I got a date with a doctor!"

Limping, he made for the wings, where he could see Mallox's shirt-front.

"Hi! Come back!" yelled a voice from the amphitheatre, and in a trance Hercules saw Mallox waving him back to the stage. He turned, hesitant and uncertain.

looks at him," and behind the shrinking cripple's outward buffoonery a sudden gleaming idea came: Why shouldn't he make capital out of his stunted frame as "Maximilian" had made it out of his perfection?

'I'll have a cut at it!'' thought Hercules in that tense moment; and looking up he caught Mallox's eye, saw him nod and smile, and turned to the audience again.

With a desperately working brain he dug up every joke he'd ever heard; pattered as he'd pattered at street corners; as he'd heard hucksters patter in the selling of their wares; and during the whole time the audience chuckled in monotone, desiring to laugh loudly and long at the utter ridiculousness of his appearance, but loath to lose a single one of the pearls of natural humour which dripped from the dwarf's lips.

But at last he ran dry. The shooting,



Laughter swept the stalls and pit, mounted to the dress-

"What you want?" he shouted across the orchestra. "I ain't a funny man! I'm 'Ercules, the scene-shifter. A chap shifted me into view by accident! I ain't funny. I—" He stopped abruptly, realizing that his voice could not be heard above the thunder of laughter his appearance alone caused; and at that moment his father's words came to him: "If I call him Hercules folk'll laugh the minnit they

stabbing pain from his injured ankle was stupefying him; his heart was beating with the speed of a racing motor-engine; the stage suddenly seemed to float round and from beneath his feet. His words came slower and slower, as though he were falling to sleep, and with a sigh he sank to the boards, as though weary of his job

With the touch of an artist, Mallox signalled the curtain to fall. Hercules had

made an original entry, he had chanced to make an equally original exit. And from beyond that curtain, as Mallox and a stagehand lifted the dwarf up and carried him to A YEAR later Hercules, now shaven and clothed in the high note of fashion, walked along by the sea at Monte Carlo; by his side strolled a man of huge

frame but wasted muscles, throwing into strong relief the stunted figure of the dwarf by his side.

" Lord ! " said Hercules, presently. "It don't seem real, does it? Twelve months ago you was a popular favourite and give me a job to go about with you to show your bigness off; and now because 'Bang' Thomas broke you, and tried to break me, I'm the popular favourite and have given you the job of showing my littleness off!"

" Maximilian " smiled sadly.

"It's a funny world, Mouse," he

" But not such a bad 'un after all," added the dwarf. He paused and watched his companion's gait for a second. "Yes," he continued, presently, ' you're walking a whole lot better to-day. It's a good job I heard of that French surgeon and, thanks to the public being tickled to death by my stunted shape, was able

to pay any fee he liked to ask.'

"Maximilian" smiled and gazed out to sea sadly. He had relearned the old fable that at times a mouse is mightier than a lion



circle and gallery, and crackled round the boxes.

a dressing-room, a storm of applause dithered round the theatre. What mattered it to the packed audience that trouble and weariness were in the world? A great new laughter-maker had been given them!

- CENTS

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

698.—A REDUCED KNIGHT'S TOUR.

I have stated in these pages and elsewhere that a complete re-entrant knight's tour cannot be made on a rectangular board of fewer than 30 squares. This is quite correct, but all writers on the subject have



supposed that the board must be 6 by 5, following the belief of the great Euler himself that no such tour could be made on any board with only three squares on one side. We have, unfortunately, taken that for granted, but Mr. Ernest Bergholt has discovered that it is an error. A re-entrant tour (that is, one in which the last move, after visiting every square, brings the knight back to its starting point) is possible on the board shown—ro by 3. It is an interesting study to discover the greatest number of fundamentally different ways in which this may be done, for these are very few. Variations obtained by merely turning the board round or reflecting in a mirror are not considered as fundamentally different. As the tour is re-entrant, you may, of course, start wherever you like.

699.—FACTORIZING.

AN anonymous correspondent asks me to give the factors (the numbers that will divide it without any remainder) of this number—I o o o o o o o o o o I. This is easily done if you happen to know something about numbers of this peculiar form. In fact, it is just as easy for me to give two factors if you insert, say, one hundred and one noughts, instead of eleven, between the two ones. There is a curious, easy, and beautiful rule for these cases. Can you find it?

700.—SELLING EGGS.

A WOMAN took a certain number of eggs to market and sold some of them. The next day, through the industry of her hens, the number left over had been doubled, and she sold the same number as the previous day. On the third day the new remainder was trebled and she sold the same number as before. On the fourth day the remainder was quadrupled, and her sales the same as before. On the fifth day what had been left over were quintupled, yet she sold exactly the same as on all the previous occasions, and so disposed of her entire stock. What is the smallest number of eggs she could have taken to market the first day, and how many did she sell daily?

701.—A RUSTIC CHARADE.

A CHARMING young correspondent who has passed her ninetieth year and is still enthusiastic about puzzles reminds me of a little rustic charade that I

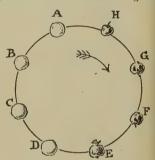
heard in the West of England as a boy, but had quite forgotten. Here it is:—

My first's a little thing what hops. My second gives us good hay crops. My whole we eats with mutton chops.

702.—APPLES AND ORANGES.

A MAN arranged four apples and four oranges in a circle in the order shown in the illustration. He told his son to select any number he chose and, starting at

H as "one" and counting in the direction of the arrow, to take the fruit at which his count stopped Removing that fruit and starting again at the next one in order, he could count out a second fruit. And so on until he had taken four of them. The boy decided to count out every



seventh. This, of course, gave him first B, then C, then A, and finally the apple G. He was disappointed, as he wanted to get all the oranges. What is the smallest number he might have selected to do this? Of course, 840 (the L.C.M. of 8, 7, 6, 5) will count them out in the order A, B, C, D, but there are eleven smaller numbers that will serve.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

694.—A GENERAL ELECTION.

THE answer is 39,147,416 different ways. Add 3 to the number of members (making 618) and deduct 1 from the number of parties (making 3). Then the answer will be the number of ways in which 3 things may be selected from 618. That is $\frac{618 \times 617 \times 616}{1 \times 2 \times 3} = 39,147,416$ ways.

695.—AN ENIGMA.

THE required word is "invisible"! (I N visible).

696.—AN EPITAPH (A.D. 1538).

If two widows had each a son, and each widow married the son of the other and had a daughter by the marriage, all the relationships mentioned would be found to result.

697.—FOR JUVENILES.

Tom must have had seven apples and Dick five.



whopper he just lost." Now, however, it should no longer be a difficult matter for the dog-owner to make sceptics realize that the marvellous things he relates about canines are true; he can take his friends to the cinema and show them a dog which not only vindicates everything he has said, but which will awe the doubting Thomases into silence with its almost incredible cleverness.

This dog does a hundred and one things, from falling in love to being bowed down with well-simulated grief. He is no trick dog, this, for he plays the leading rôle in film dramas in which he expresses emotions almost as realistically as any Rodolph Valentino; and, indeed, one has to see him to realize how truly wonderful he is.

Strongheart, for such is the name of this remarkable wolf-dog, has been a cinema star for some years now. He has figured in three film dramas, and he is at present completing another and even greater picture appropriately enough, Jack London's

"White Fang.

Strongheart might well have been the prototype for Jack London's hero dogs, for he has had a career as romantic and varied, as full of thrills, adventures, and daring deeds, as any of these canines of fiction. It is hard to have to confess the fact that Strongheart was born a German. He was trained in his native country as a police

dog. Happily his heart was in the right place, for during the war he worked with the Belgian Red Cross, bringing in the wounded from the line of fire and little dreaming that his training for this work of mercy was to stand him in good stead when, years afterwards, he made his bow to the cinema camera. For three years he was in the field continuously, except when slightly wounded by shrapnel after the second battle

of Ypres.

After the war an American film producer, in search of an intelligent dog for cinema work, heard of Strongheart, and, finding that the remarkable stories he had been told of the animal's sagacity fell short of the actual truth, entered into negotiations for his purchase. So Strongheart said goodbye to his Belgian owner-to understand whose language, after the German of his former master, had caused him so much pain and worry-to begin life again in a strange land, where his new master's speech appeared to be even more heart-breakingly difficult to comprehend.

Strongheart soon adapted himself to his new surroundings, and not long afterwards he came into the custody of Mr. Laurence Trimble, a trainer of animals, under whose mastership he was to rise to the highest

pinnacle of dog-fame.

With his various masters the dog had been

singularly fortunate; they showed him the requisite amount of kindness to develop his natural abilities, whereas cruelty in any form in all probability would have repressed his initiative once and for all. But he was most lucky in falling finally into the hands of Mr. Trimble, who has made a science of animal training, and whose two main maxims in this connection are: that scorn is the most severe form of chastisement in the canine world, and that kindness will make a dog do more than cruelty.

R TRIMBLE set about training Strongheart, and for six months the two were never out of sight or hearing of one another for longer than ten minutes. At the end of that period the dog was cast for his first big *rôle*—in "The Silent Call." This story, vivid, absorbing, and sometimes a little grim, was set in the mountains of California. According to the plot, the ranchers are making a war of extermination against wolves. One, however—half dog, half coyote, and mated to a wolf—is spared, and her puppy, Flash, is adopted by one of the ranchers.

Strongheart played the part of Flash, and we see him grow to maturity. Then his life is made miserable because he is left alone when his master goes on a journey. He becomes savage, or at least the old instincts return to his breast, and one night he attacks the cattle. The ranchers chase him to the hills, where he mates with a wolf. Afterwards he returns to the ranch and succeeds in making friends again with the men, with the result that he is reinstated.

In this picture Mr. Trimble was faced with one of the most difficult problems so far as Strongheart was concerned. The dog had been trained never to attack other animals. How, then, could he be induced to make war upon the cattle? The difficulty was solved by bringing about a friendship between the dog and a young heifer with whom Strongheart was trained to play. Thus it is that in the film we see the dog make repeated rushes at the heifer, jumping upon him from one side and then another. But these manœuvres on the part of the dog, far from being savage, are natural ebullitions of friendliness.

The actions of Strongheart throughout the film are remarkable, and the impression one obtains is that the dog feels the part, that he really does, in turn, fall in love, that he really is consumed with hatred, that he is jealous and angry. It is not so much that he displays these emotions—the remarkable fact is that he reveals them at the proper time, so that the story, with its canine hero, runs on smoothly, one dramatic incident following another until at the curtain

one is struck with wonder at the dog's power.

Now let us see how Mr. Trimble succeeded in getting Strongheart to "register" the proper emotion at the proper time. In "The Silent Call," Strongheart and his wild wolf mate—a part played by a full-blooded wolf, Lady Silver, trained by Mr. Trimble—have made their home in a cave in the mountains. The dog goes out in search of food for the wolf and their cubs. When he returns, he finds his home has been dynamited by the villain in the story, a man who hates dogs, wolves, and every other kind of animal. In the film we see Strongheart display fierce hatred and

then overwhelming grief.

The dog was not ill-treated to get this scene—or, indeed, any other. The effect was secured quite simply. A blanket belonging to a dog which Strongheart really despised and hated was placed in the dirt of the den. When Strongheart passed before the camera he caught a whiff of the scent of this dog's blanket. Immediately his hair bristled and he darted for the den, naturally thinking that the other dog was there. We see him begin to dig fiercely in the débris of the den, and he is growing angrier and angrier, when he suddenly stops. He has heard the bark of the other dog, who, though the audience do not know it, has been placed in a wired-in box and brought within sight of Strongheart but out of range of the camera. Strongheart moves away from the den towards the other dog. His ears are flat back against his head, and he is showing his savage fangs in a vicious His one idea seems to be revenge, to get at this villain who has brought his home to ruin. He stands like that, the picture of rage incarnate, looking in the direction taken by the villain.

For the purposes of the story it is now necessary for the animal to show grief. He must turn his thoughts from the villain, his enemy, to his home and loved ones. How is this to be done?—how is Strongheart's very real anger to be curbed? For Mr. Trimble it is a comparatively simple matter. He is standing on one side of the camera, though, of course, out of range, for the dog is occu-

pying the whole of the picture.

"Strongheart, aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Mr. Trimble asks. Then he turns his back on the dog. That is all—and it is quite sufficient. The dog knows he is scorned—by his master, the person he loves most dearly, his best friend in all the world. What can it mean? What has he done? We can imagine Strongheart asking himself these questions; and his face assumes an expression of abject misery. If ever anyone, any animal, was overcome by grief, it is

Strongheart. He grovels in the dirt, heart-broken!

Of course, to the audience it appears as if Strongheart's sorrow has been caused by the loss of his mate and cubs.

Later in the same film Strongheart is shown, at dusk, on the pinnacle of a hill. He is lying down, and gazes wistfully into the distant valley. There comes a "close-up," and we see an expression of infinite sadness on his face, for he is still, apparently, mourning the loss of his dear ones. In reality the dog is not mourning any loss. His thoughts are upon one person only—his master. He is simply obeying his master's command to remain on that spot until he returns. Strongheart sees Mr. Trimble walk down the valley, and the farther he goes the more miserablelooking the dog becomes. Strong-heart watches his master out of sight, and then, as if he has given up hope, he lies down and puts

his head between his paws, yearning with all his heart for the word that will release him.

When, after the completion of the first film, Mr. Trimble came to take stock of what had been achieved, he arrived at the conclusion that the time spent in training The trainer's experience of Strongheart had confirmed him in his opinion that, though a dog has not reasoning power, he has a certain faculty which is a remarkably



His face assumes an expression of abject misery. If ever any animal was overcome by grief, it is Strongheart.

efficient substitute for it, and that this faculty is occasionally so extraordinary in its manifestations that it borders on the psychic.

"The average dog is an excellent mind-reader," Mr. Trimble declares. "He is not

half so easily deceived about some things as are men. His master, for example, may harbour a dislike for a certain person, and yet, in the pre-sence of that person, he speaks kindly and without apparent malice. The dog is not to be deceived by this. In spite of his master's show of courtesy, he growls and gives other evidence of his dislike for his visitor. He is watching every expression on the face of his master, and in every little facial twist during the conversation reads dislike. His master's words mean nothing; they are insincere. And so, in spite of his master's outward attitude, the dog is always hostile when that other person is near by."

This is not reasoning power on the part of the

dog, Mr. Trimble argues. But it is the equivalent in the world of dumb brutes—it is the association of ideas. The dog has



Dog v. Man.—Strongheart is seen forcing the villain down a steep slope into the river.

Strongheart had been fruitful in the extreme, and it was possible that even greater things might be done by the canine actor.

observed these same expressions, scowls, etc., before, when his master made no attempt to cloak his real feelings by deceiving words. It is this same association of ideas that enables one to get a dog to do things. Take the case of a dog-owner who has been in the habit of bailing out a boat with a sponge. "Go and get my sponge, Fido," the master says. The dog goes off immediately, and returns with the sponge. Now, if it were reasoning power that the dog used he would perhaps have got a bailer or a hose-pipe, or some equally good substitute for a sponge. But as he had always seen his master bail out the boat in the same way, he could only associate the sponge with this The difference between human reasoning and a dog's association of ideas is reached just at this point. Mr. Trimble doesn't think a dog will ever get beyond

Mr. Trimble was, if possible, even more painstaking in training Strongheart for "Brawn of the North," his second picture. He exhibited almost superhuman patience, and scene after scene was taken again and well he may expect something good. Mr. Trimble acts quite differently, for the idea he instils into Strongheart is that if he does as he is told he will get his master's approval; if he doesn't, approval will be withheld. It doesn't take long for us, as spectators, to see that Strongheart will do more to please his master than many another dog would do to get a reward.

The dog is never punished in the sense that he is chastised. The greatest instrument for discipline and training in Mr. Trimble's hands is the dog's dread of reproach. When Strongheart sees by the expression on his master's face that he has failed in anything, his dejection is almost tragic. Mr. Trimble holds the view that when Strongheart makes a mistake he does not do so intentionally; the fact is that he did not understand. And in these circumstances it is for his trainer to exercise patience and show him what is right.

"Brawn of the North" is a much more vigorous picture in many ways. The scene is laid in the snowy wastes of Alaska, where "Brawn," played by Strongheart,

and his master and mistress encounter many adventures. Onè of the most exciting incidents in the story is when the sledgedogs run away, carrying the baby with them, and Strongheart goes to the rescue. The "huskies" have been frightened by a pack of timber wolves, which, driven to desperation by the pangs of hunger, had followed the man and the girl, who had been journeying south with their baby. During a stop the wolves



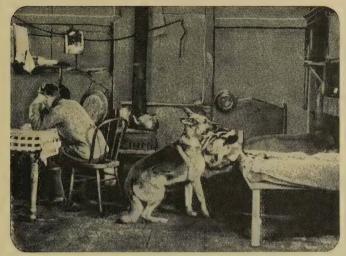
Strongheart to the Rescue.—Carrying a baby, wrapped in furs, back through the snow to its parents.

again until it was at last considered to be perfect.

By transporting ourselves, in imagination, to Hollywood, we get an interesting insight into Mr. Trimble's methods of training, and note with surprise that these are unconventional in the extreme. For instance, the trainer does not give the dog any reward for obeying a command; that is to say, he does not give him a biscuit or piece of meat to impress upon him that when he does a thing

made an attack and the dogs took to flight, rushing panic-stricken through the snow, dragging the sledge with its tiny burden behind them.

We see the wolves set off in pursuit, and excitement reaches fever-heat when Strongheart goes to the rescue. His canine intelligence tells him that he must take a short cut if he is to outwit the wolves; so he makes for the summit of the hill round the base of which the fugitive pack have



The End of the Journey.—Strongheart restoring the baby to its bed.

disappeared. Before he has gone far Strongheart comes upon the sledge, which has caught in a tree trunk. The dogs are straining their hardest to pull it free. In an instant Strongheart has lifted the baby to the ground, and next moment he sets off, carrying the child back to its grief-stricken parents.

In "Brawn of the North," as in "The Silent Call," we see Strongheart come to grips with the villain. Now the dog was quite friendly with the men who played these respective parts, yet in the first picture it was necessary for Strongheart to maul

his human enemy in a most savage manner, while in "Brawn of the North" he had to fight with the villain, roll down a snow-covered slope with him, and then force him into a swiftly flowing stream, in which he (the villain) was supposed to have met his death.

In both cases the desired effect was secured by making Strongheart believe that it was all fun. In the second film we see the dog making repeated jumps at the villain's throat, and at last lay hold of him and drag him down the hill. The secret was that Strongheart had been taught to play with

the man's tie, which the villain, unknown to the audience, waved in the dog's face. Strongheart made playful snaps at the tie, and then the villain put his hand, containing the tie, to his neck, giving the appearance in the film of protecting his throat from the dog. Of course, the audience expect the dog to jump at the man's neck, and Strongheart does not disappoint them, probably thinking that this game is just the sort of thing he likes.

At last the dog makes a higher jump at the man, who suddenly throws his arms round the animal, and the two roll over and over down the hill.

To all appearances Strongheart has bowled the man over. As they roll down we see Strongheart "worrying" his victim, but it is all friendly play and part of the game.

In yet another scene there is a touch of comedy when Strongheart, coming suddenly upon the lovers in the act of kissing, shows the greatest amazement. The man and the girl are in the cabin, when Strongheart comes to the door. Just then the man takes the girl in his arms and kisses her on the lips, and at the same time the dog cocks his head first to one side and then to another. You feel that Strongheart is



Strongheart's Fight with the Villain.—It looks like a savage attack, but is really play.

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saving to himself: "Well, I never! Did you ever see anything like that?"

This was how the above effect was secured. While the couple were kissing, Mr. Trimble, being in the cabin but out of range of the camera, called Strongheart. The dog came at once and, opening the door, stopped on the threshold.

"Well, Strongheart," his trainer declared,

"how would you like——?"
The question was left unfinished, and Strongheart, expecting Mr. Trimble to say something like "a bone" or "a walk,"

jerked his head from side to side, striving eagerly not to miss his master's next word. He was completely keyed-up for something unexpected, waiting for a surprise. And, of course, the result was that in the film the dog is seen to be acting the scene as if he understood exactly what was expected of him.

It is a commonplace to hear people, when speaking of a favourite dog, declare that "he understands every word I say." Literally, that may not be quite accurate, but it comes very near to being true so far as Strongheart is concerned. Sometimes it appears as if he follow every word in his master's everyday conversation. Thus Mr. Trimble may be speaking to someone in an ordinary tone

of voice. His remarks have nothing whatever to do with Strongheart. Then in the same tone he goes on, still speaking in his ordinary voice, "Now I am going to tell Strongheart to go to bed." Next moment Strongheart has got to his feet and calmly made his way to his sleeping-place.

Mr. Trimble's views on dogs are interesting. For instance, he firmly believes that they have individual degrees of character. Strongheart, he says, has an innate dignity and depth of feeling that are as fine as anything that may be encountered in a human being. It is therefore the easiest thing in the world to humiliate him, but by doing so unwarrantably one would suppress those finer instincts.

"On no account laugh at an animal's mis-

takes," Mr. Trimble declares. "Do not ridicule him, and do not play practical jokes upon him. Above all, never put him in a position where he will feel embarrassed or foolish. You will hurt his feelings just in the same way as you would hurt those of a man in similar circumstances. Again, my advice to dogowners is never to sneer at their pets. An animal that has any nobility in its character will be hurt to the quick by such treatment, which will break rather than build up the bond of friendship that should exist between dog and master."

By the time this is in print, Strongheart's third picture, "The Love Master, should be released.

Strongheart, who is now about nine years of age, is at present hard at work

on his latest film, "White Fang," in which he should be seen to even greater advantage. As it is, however, Strongheart has more than earned the description of "the wonder-dog of the films."



You feel that Strongheart is saying to himself: "Well, I never! Did you ever see anything like that?'





GLADYS ST. JOHN-LOE

ILLUSTRATED BY

SAID "good night" to Valda outside the narrow, rather grimly-ugly house in which she lived, and proceeded to walk home to my lodgings in the neighbourhood of Notting Hill Gate.

It was a long walk. It was also very late, and I was more than usually tired; but somehow the thought of bed didn't attract me. My brain was on fire with the irritant fever of revolt, a chafing, passionate revolt against the whole of the facts of life as

presented to me at the moment.

It had been one of those exasperating evenings when everything seems to go wrong out of sheer cussedness, when the merest trivialities become magnified into towering grievances. For no particular reason we had both been feeling nervy and strung-up, ready to start a disagreement over the least thing; and as I tramped up the slight incline of Church Street, under a waning September moon that bobbed illusively among the housetops, I found myself reviewing the situation from the lowest depths of despondency.

We had been engaged three years now, Valda and I-three post-war years of everlasting struggle against circumstancesand our chances of marrying seemed as remote as ever. I was still the impecunious journalist I had been in the summer of 1920—immensely keen on my work but lacking any definite guarantee of the future while Valda still filled the post of shorthandtypist in a City merchant's office. weren't afraid of taking risks, but it happened that we were more than ordinarily ambitious. Idealists, I suppose you'd call us. We wanted so much to make a fine thing out of life, to weave into it the pattern of a rare and lasting beauty. We shrank from the possibility of being sucked down into

the welter of poverty and meanness that seemed to swamp so many of the lives of the people around us. And so time had dragged on—mockingly, churlishly. That at the end of three years we still continued to be genuinely in love was the only bright spot on the horizon. And to-night even that had seemed in danger of eclipse.

I drew in a long breath and stared gloomily at the huddled shadows of the houses. Then, abruptly, I squared my shoulders, lifted my gaze to the slender wisp of a moon, and vowed renewed defiance of fate. "Hope springs eternal—" It wasn't reasonable to suppose that for-

tune could elude me for ever.

WITH intense weariness, and the aid of banister rails that shook in their sockets like teeth in the jaws of a skull, I climbed the stairs to my stuffy little second-floor bed-sitting-room.

I lit the hissing gas-jet, tossed my hat on to a peg on the wall, and glanced apathetically about the room. And almost the first thing I noticed was a telegram propped against the water-jug on the table in the middle.

Wondering a little, I picked it up, tore open the flimsy yellow envelope, and stood close up under the gas in order more easily to decipher the pencilled writing. The next moment a sensation of surprise ran through me like an electric shock. The telegram was from Leeds, and was signed by a firm of solicitors whose name was familiar to me. In the terse wording peculiar to such methods of communication, it informed me of the death that day of my uncle, Silas Cadwell, and of the fact that the funeral would take place at three p.m. on Monday, 17th.

Monday! The day after to-morrow! I glanced at the post-office timing and saw that the message had been handed in at five-fifteen on Friday. That meant that it must have arrived soon after I had left for Gravesend on the special reporting job that had kept me busy all the previous night.

With the telegram still in my hand, I sank limply on to the edge of the bed. And suddenly all the bitter stored-up memories of this man, who had been my guardian and my father's half-brother, crowded back into my mind like so many gibbering

ghosts.

I couldn't pretend to be sorry. There had never been any love lost between us. Even as a child he had hated me, punishing me savagely for the most trifling offences, striving by every means in his power to bend me to his will, to crush my naturally independent spirit under the grim weight of his own ruthlessness. But for the intervention of Uncle Nathan—who invariably defended me against his brother's periodic outbursts of cruelty—I have sometimes wondered how I should have survived at all.

Nathan Cadwell was two years younger than Silas, and a more completely opposite type of man it would be impossible to imagine. He was gentle and tolerant where the other was hard and bitter. His expression always held a certain wistful quality—like that of a child when it shuts fast the door of reality upon the rosy chamber of dreams. He was the most impracticable, the most patient, the most simplehearted man I have ever known.

As I undressed and got into bed, I found myself speculating upon how much money Uncle Silas had left. That he must have died a rich man was certain. Like his brother Nathan, he had never married. Every ounce of his ruthless slave-driving energy he had put into the building up of the cotton and woollen manufacturing business he had inherited from his father. For forty years he had squeezed gold out of life as some men squeeze happiness. And now he was gone, blown out like a flame in the wind, leaving behind him the solid robe of material possessions with which he had striven to cover his spirit's nakedness.

Not for a moment did I delude myself with the notion that he had left anything to me. Our mutual antagonism had gone too deep for any last-minute softening on his part. But I liked to think that Uncle Nathan would benefit.

The younger of the two brothers was a comparatively poor man. What money he had originally possessed had dwindled away in numerous unprofitable channels. He spent most of his time conducting "experiments"

of a chemical nature and in inventing things for which no one could find any practical use. He was also a keen botanist—having written a standard work on English wild flowers—and would sometimes go off upon long tramping tours by himself, vanishing and reappearing in the most casual manner. During the war he had become interested in the study of explosives, and for the purpose of carrying out his investigations in this direction had built himself a small bungalow in the middle of a wood in Kent, where he lived alone save for an elderly housekeeper.

It was now several months since I had had any news of him, and the thought that he would certainly be present at his brother's funeral was the main cause of my final decision to go up to Leeds on the Monday.

WHEN I arrived at my deceased relative's house in Tyne Street—the gaunt red house in which I had passed seven miserable years of my youth—it was to discover that, contrary to all expectations, Uncle Nathan was not among the mourners. No one seemed able to account for his absence.

"I'm sure I can't think why he hasn't come," old Neasden, the solicitor, replied in answer to my anxious questioning. "A telegram was sent to him shortly before nine o'clock on Friday morning. Mr. Cadwell died at exactly five minutes past eleven, and I at once dispatched a second telegram informing Mr. Nathan of the—ah—sad news."

"And he hasn't written or—or anything?"
"No. Of course, there's the chance that he may have been away—something of that sort."

I agreed, remembering Uncle Nathan's habit of occasionally disappearing from normal existence and leaving no channel of communication open behind him. His failure to put in an appearance had disappointed me keenly. I looked upon my journey from London as a woeful waste of time and money.

Late in the afternoon, in the lugubrious dining-room—to me hateful with the memory of past chastisements—Mr. Neasden read the will. It was a lengthy, tiresomely involved affair, from whose pedantic verbosities only one fact emerged with any clearness. This was to the effect that, after the disposal of certain minor legacies to various unimportant relatives, the whole of the residue of the dead man's very considerable estate was to go to his brother, Nathan Cadwell—should the latter be alive to receive it. In the event of his being dead, it was to pass to some specified institution whose name I did not catéh.

THE formality of the will-reading over, I hurried back to London-to find a surprise awaiting me in the person of old Martha Crump, Uncle Nathan's housekeeper.

As I opened the door of my room she rose up out of the shabby depths of the solitary arm-chair, lifted a red and swollen face out of a large, damp-looking handkerchief, and

made a hurried movement towards me.
"Oh, Master Denny!" she exclaimed, using the old name that still occasionally rose to her lips in moments of stress. "I'm that glad you've come. I was beginnin' ter "'Im!" A look of scorn flashed into her red-rimmed eyes. "Who cares about 'im? It's master I'm meanin'."

"What? Uncle Nathan? Dead? But -but surely you must be making a

mistake?"

She shook her head, tears streaming freely down her wrinkled cheeks.

"Mistake? 'Ow could I be makin' a mistake when it was meself as found 'im ? ''

"Found him? I'm afraid I don't understand. You say my uncle's dead?



I stood close under the gas in order more easily to decipher the pencilled writing.

think as 'ow you weren't never goin' ter

"You! Martha!" I replied, amazedly. "But why——? What's the matter?"

She stared at me tragically. Her lips

trembled.

" E-everything's the matter," she sobbed, wildly. "Everything! 'Ow ter begin tellin' 'e I don't rightly know—that I don't. Even ter jest think of it m-makes me go all over a-shiver."

"To—to think of what?"

"Why, a-findin' im d-dead—an' all that."

"Dead?" My bewilderment deepened. "Finding who dead? You aren't meaning Mr. Silas, are you?"

She sobbed noisily, dabbed her eyes with the handkerchief, and repeated :-

"Dead right enough, poor man. And such an unnatural death an' all. Every time I thinks about it—

"Unnatural? But tell me——" I took her gently by the shoulders, put her back into the arm-chair, and seated myself opposite. Then, as calmly as possible, I went on: "Tell me—how did it happen?"

She choked down a fresh spasm of weeping. Her whole face became convulsed with horror.

"Blowed 'isself up-gunpowder, or summat. Leastways, that's what they says." "Who does?"

"Police-Sergeant Motts-an' all them as is down there. Oh, a rare crowd, I can tell 'e—traipsin' around and pokin' their noses into everythin'. An' poor master lyin' there a corpse! Oh, it's awful! Awful! I couldn't bear it!"

I nodded understandingly. In imagination I could see it all so vividly—the dead man, the little bungalow hidden away in the desolate wood, the gaping crowd of villagers drawn to the scene, like filings to a magnet,

at the first hint of tragedy.

"And when did it—this accident—happen?"

Martha blew her nose, straightened her somewhat tipsy-looking headgear, and re-

"That, sir's, what they don't rightly know -leas'ways, not 'zackly. They says as 'ow it must 'ave bin some time early on Friday morning—between nine and ten o'clock."

"Friday? Three days ago? surely—! How is it they can't say nearer than that? There must have been a noise of some sort? The explosion, you know! You must have heard something?"

"But that's jest the trouble, sir. I weren't there to 'ear."

' Not there?"

"No. You see, I'd gone off ter spend a couple o' days with me sister, Mrs. Chandler, wot lives at Canterbury—'er bein' that bad with the rheumatics an' all. Master-'e were out in 'is 'workshop,' as 'e calls it, when I goes off about a quarter past eight on Friday morning." She sniffed noisily, gulped down a sob, and added: "An' ter think I weren't never goin' ter see 'im alive agin!"

"And you say it was you who who first

discovered what had happened?"

"Yes, sir-when I gets back agin this mornin'. And such a turn as it give meter see 'im a-lyin' there so queer and stilllike—an' all one side the shed blowed out. At'first I thought as 'ow 'e'd jest fainted or 'E didn't seem ter be 'urt anywheres-no blood or anything like that. But when I goes ter try an' pick 'im up——!
Oh, it was awful! I sha'n't never forget it -not 'til me dyin' day, that I sha'n't, sir."

I nodded sympathetically.

"And then? What did you do then?" "Well, I was that scared I jest run fer all I was worth down ter Mr. Godden's. 'E goes off on 'is bike down ter Sergeant Motts in th' village—an' soon there was a rare crowd around, traipsin' everywhere and arstin' me all sorts o' questions. And at last I couldn't stand no more, so I took an' come straight 'ere ter you, sir. I says ter meself as 'ow you'd know what was best ter do,"

She regarded me with an air of resigned and tragic helplessness, and as I returned

her gaze I felt myself to be suddenly quite incapable of answering her. Getting up from my chair, I walked over to the window, stood staring vaguely down into the lamplit street below. Uppermost in my consciousness, piercing a whole host of conflicting emotions, was a sharp sense of loss. That Uncle Nathan should have died like that, so dramatically and alone, and-by a curious coincidence—on the same day, almost at the same hour, as Uncle Silas, seemed fantastically incredible.

On the same day—almost at the same

The words echoed queerly in my brain, firing a sudden startled train of thought. At first it was as though only my subconscious mind realized the significance that lay behind them. Then, abruptly, the idea I was fumbling after crystallized into defi-

nite shape.

Silas Cadwell's will had stated quite clearly that the bulk of his fortune was to go to his brother Nathan if the latter were alive to receive it; but that, in the event of his being already dead, it was to pass to a certain institution. Consequently, if it could be proved that Uncle Nathan had in fact died between the hours of nine and ten on the previous Friday morning, the institution got the money. If, on the other hand, it could be proved that he had survived until after five minutes past eleven, then he inherited—in which case the final settlement of the estate depended upon whether he himself had left a will.

The problem was an intriguing one, and one which looked as though it might yield interesting developments. Half an hour later, when Martha had been provided with supper and a bed for the night, I was still pondering over the extraordinary coincidence

of my two uncles' deaths.

THE countryside, as we rushed through it in the train the following morning, was bright with autumn tints.

From Mersham Station we walked across country to the bungalow, buried in the leafy depths of Grayling Wood. And as we went, Martha—now considerably recovered in spirits-talked incessantly, until it seemed impossible that a single detail connected with the tragedy could have been left unrelated.

We found the bungalow apparently in the charge of Sergeant Motts and a police-

man from Ashford.

"Bad job, this-'bout Mr. Cadwell," the former remarked, after a brief interchange of greetings. "Such a nice, pleasant gentleman, too. Queer to think of im lying 'ere three days-and no one knowing a thing about it.

"Yes, it does seem strange."

I glanced round at the white walls of the bungalow, at the red-tiled roof that burned in the sunlight with a smouldering warmth, at the small neat patch of carefully-tended garden, at the circling mass of trees that walled it about in all directions, creating an effect of peculiar Then I isolation. added :-

"Isuppose there'll be an inquest?"

The sergeant nodded, assumed his best official air, and replied:—

"Oh, yes, sir. Always is in cases of this sort. Fixed for Friday, I b'lieve. They're goin' to fetch the body some time this afternoon."

We stood talking together for a few minutes longer. Then I left him and went into the bungalow.

In the room that had been my uncle's

bedroom, I found the dead man lying under a sheet—very calm and rigid and wax-like. Save for a bruise on the left temple and a certain discoloration of the whole of that side of the face, he seemed, superficially, at any rate, to have suffered little hurt. As I stood looking down upon the closed eyes and kindly features of the man who had been my best friend, I realized, more fully than I had yet done, the extent of my loss.

During the afternoon they fetched the body away on an ambulance, and with its going the last few stragglers from the village and the cottages round about melted from the scene. It was then that—prompted by the instinct of curiosity, which I suppose is inherent in all of us—I began a careful and detailed examination of the place.

The bungalow itself was a small four-roomed affair, standing in a quarter of an acre of cleared woodland, about thirty



"And when did it—this accident—happen?"

yards from a soft road and a good half-mile from the highway that runs between Ruckinge and Aldington. It would be difficult, I think, to find a more completely isolated spot anywhere in the South of England. About another hundred yards or so farther into the wood, and completely hidden from the bungalow by an intervening screen of trees and undergrowth, was the shed or "workshop" which Uncle Nathan had used for his experiments. It consisted of a single fairly large oblong apartment with windows running the entire length of one side, and a smaller outhouse which protruded at right angles from the main structure, and which had evidently been used as some sort of a store-room.

The interior of the former I found to be littered with innumerable oddments of whose nature and purpose I had only the vaguest idea. A carpenter's bench ran from end to end immediately in front of the

windows, and the thing that struck me as being very curious was the fact that, whilst a large section of the opposite wall had been blown out, not a single window had been broken or anything upon the bench displaced. There was not so much as a bottle overturned or a test tube smashed, though, judging by the distance to which bits of wood and metal guttering had been carried, the force of the explosion must have been very considerable. By the time I had finished examining the

shed the autumn dusk was already gathering and I was compelled to go back to the bungalow. Here I proceeded to while away the long evening by glancing through my

dead uncle's papers.

There were a great number of them-all carefully packed away into tin boxes and containing, for the most part, elaborate accounts of past experiments, together with carefully-preserved diagrams and formulæ. Finally, in a drawer in a desk, I came upon a diary which had the appearance of having been kept scrupulously exact and up-todate. All the entries made during the last few days before my uncle's death were given over to recording, in minute detail, the progress he was making in the manufacture of a certain substance which he called "Rodinite," and which, with his usual optimism, he seemed to anticipate was going to supersede all other forms of explosive for purposes of gun-firing in warfare.

The very last entry of all-written on the evening of Thursday, September 13thconcluded with the significant phrase: "To-morrow I shall make one more test-

then I shall know.'

I closed the diary with a sigh and was in the act of putting it back into the drawer from which I had taken it, when my fingers encountered a folded sheet of stiffish paper. Quite casually I took it out and opened it. The next moment I had uttered a cry of thrilled amazement. The paper was no-thing less important than my uncle's will, drawn up only a few weeks before and witnessed by old Martha and someone signing the name of the Rev. John Potter. In it the dead man left everything he died possessed of to his brother Silas--with the provision that, should the latter pre-decease him, everything was to revert to myself.

My hands shook as they held the document. Springing to my feet, I began to pace the room in a wild frenzy of excitement-while each moment the realization of all that those simple words might mean to me grew clearer and clearer in my brain.

If it could be proved that Nathan Cadwell had outlived his brother Silas-even by so much as a few minutes-then I was the possessor of a fortune. If the reverse should be established, then everythingincluding the modest possessions which had been Uncle Nathan's during his lifetimewould automatically pass to the institution whose very name I had not thought worthy of remembrance. It was maddening—the sense of so much hanging in so flimsy a balance! One short hour or so of time!

As I paced feverishly to and fro, I thought of all that the money would mean to me. Valda and I could be married at once. future would open before us like some wide and splendid avenue, flower-strewn with the rosy promise of happiness. All the fret and strain of the past three years

would be banished for ever.

Such was the agitation of my mind that it was long past midnight before I could bring myself to lie down on a couch, draw à rug over me, and attempt to sleep.

THERE followed a day and a half of nerve-racking tension. The problem of the inheritance—which before had been a matter of curiosity rather than anything else-had now assumed a character of vital importance. I could think of nothing else. The very idea of leaving the matter to be solved by the slow unwinding of the law-or by whatever process it would eventually have to be settled—was intolerable. That, somewhere among the conglomerate hotch-potch of facts connected with the events of the previous Friday, there existed a clue capable of revealing the truth, I felt convinced. The trouble was to find it.

I spent the whole of Wednesday scouring the neighbourhood for information that might seem to have a bearing upon the problem; and by sorting out and piecing together the various scraps thus gathered, I found myself in possession of the following coherent and relevant facts.

Martha had left the bungalow at a few minutes before eight on the Friday morning, having previously carried her master's breakfast to the work-shed, where—as far as she was able to recollect—he appeared to be in the act of weighing some sort of a dark-coloured powder out of a glass bottle on to some scales. She expressed the opinion that he would probably have eaten the food without delay, because "if there was one thing 'e couldn't abide it was cold coffee."

The police surgeon still adhered to the belief that death had occurred not later, and probably considerably earlier, than ten o'clock. This opinion seemed now strengthened by the result of the post-mortem, which had established the fact that the dead man must have eaten a meal only a



"Bad job, this-'bout Mr. Cadwell," the sergeant remarked.

very short time before the explosion—and none of the food which Martha had left prepared in the bungalow had been touched.

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From the boy at the Bilsington postoffice I learnt that he had delivered the first telegram as nearly as he could remember at about twenty minutes past eleven, that he had knocked repeatedly at the front door for several minutes without being able to make anyone hear, and had finally pushed the telegram into the letter-box and gone away. He seemed fairly certain that he had heard no unusual sound either coming or going, but, after much careful prompting, added the significant detail that a cat had jumped off a window-sill and rubbed itself against his legs—a large tabby cat similar to the one discovered dead within a few feet of my uncle's body. It was about half-past two when he returned with the second telegram, and, again receiving no answer to his knocking, had pushed it, as before, into the letter-box.

No one in the neighbourhood appeared to recollect having heard the report of the explosion, but, as blasting operations had been going on for some days in a stone quarry not far away, it seemed to me improbable that the noise, even if heard, would have attracted any especial atten-

tion.

The only hopeful piece of evidence centred about the cat, and this, when I mentioned it to Martha, was robbed of its value by her immediate reply:—

"Oh, them! Well, there's two of 'em, you see—Peter and Paul—like as two peas. Strangers can't never tell 'em apart."

Try as I might I could get hold of no definite clue that did not tend, if anything, to establish the probability of the accident having occurred, as the doctor believed, well before ten o'clock.

BY Thursday I had worked myself up to a pitch of painful excitement. The inquest was to take place on the following day. At any moment now the searchlight of public inquiry was liable to be directed upon Uncle Nathan's private affairs—upon the problem of the inheritance, with its vital reaction upon my own life. The torture of suspense grew hourly more poignant.

I spent the whole of the morning in the workshop. And once more I carefully examined all that it contained, strove with all the power of my imagination to reconstruct the mise-en-scène of the tragedy. I tried to picture how Uncle Nathan must have been standing—what he must have been doing. On the whole, it seemed probable that he had been at the bench, handling the fatal Rodinite. I placed myself in a position exactly opposite the spot where his dead body had been found, and, facing the window, stared with a desperate intentness at the various objects arranged before me.

On a shelf level with the window-sill stood a number of bottles and test tubes—some empty and some containing different-coloured powders or liquids. There were also a couple of retorts, a blow-lamp, and a partly-dismantled microscope. On the bench itself were more bottles, a wooden rack into which a lens and some slides—evidently belonging to the microscope—had been carelessly propped, a pair of finely-adjusted scales under a glass bell, and several other objects whose names I did not know.

One thing which rather puzzled me was a large, very thick slab of frosted glass, slightly hollowed out in the centre and covered—as, indeed, was everything else—with a faint sprinkling of fine grey dust. It was not unlike the glass mortars which dentists use to mix metal fillings, and it occurred to me that it might have been used for mixing the explosive that had caused

the accident.

With one tentative finger I disturbed a small patch of the dust film; then, with my hand still resting on the slightly roughened surface of the glass, I stared thoughtfully out through the window at the autumntinted trees so drowsily still in the morning sunlight.

I must have been standing thus for quite a long time, lost in a teasing maze of speculative conjecture, when I became aware of a sharp burning pain on the back of my hand and, glancing down, saw that a ray of sunlight had appeared over the sloping roof of the outhouse and was falling upon the propped-up lens in such a way as to form a burning-glass whose focus coincided with the mortar.

Instinctively I snatched away my hand and held it to my lips, at the same time staring curiously at the bright spot of light that glowed like a fiery ember on the scintillating glass. And suddenly, in a flash, enlightenment came to me. I realized that I had stumbled upon the explanation of the

mysterious explosion.

Uncle Nathan must have been in the act of mixing some of the Rodinite in the glass mortar. Possibly he had turned aside a moment—I recollected that the force of the discharge appeared to have caught him upon one side of the face only—and in the short time during which his attention had been diverted the first direct beam of morning sunlight must have appeared through the window, struck the lens, and fired the powder.

I looked at my watch—which happened to be an exceptionally good timekeeper—and I saw with a spasm of terrific excitement that it was exactly fourteen minutes past eleven. And Uncle Silas had died at five

minutes past!

With my gaze fixed as though hypnotized upon the golden pool of light, I stood



With one tentative finger I disturbed a small patch of the dust film on the glass.

gripping the edge of the bench, every nerve in my body quivering painfully, a sound between a laugh and a shout trying to struggle up out of my throat.

Already the light was moving, losing the full intensity of its focus, slipping over the edge of the mortar. And as I watched it the thought stabbéd into my mind: "The powder would have been in the hollowed-out centre, not on the edge!"

But six days ago the sun would have been nearly three degrees higher. The angle would have been a trifle wider. The ray would, in all probability, have fallen exactly in the centre!

Something reeled in my brain. For a while I seemed incapable of logical reasoning. Then, inevitably, another point presented itself. It was the middle of September. The window faced, as nearly as I could judge, almost due south—with the outhouse jutting from the eastern end of it. Each day the sun would appear not only at a lower angle—but also at a later time!

I took out a handkerchief and mopped my brow. The whole of my body seemed to be suddenly damp with sweat. My hands shook as I fumbled for a notebook and pencil and began to make out a rough calculation of the daily difference of time that must be allowed for.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that it would be at least four minutes—and very likely as much as six. In which case that first beam must have appeared anything up to thirty-six minutes earlier on September 14th, which brought the probable time of the explosion to somewhere about twenty minutes to eleven—nearly half an hour before the time when Silas Cadwell was definitely known to have breathed his last.

Mechanically I put the notebook back into my pocket, turned away from the bench, and buried my face in my hands. The feeling of disappointment was intense, the reaction from soaring triumph to uttermost despair the bitterest I have ever

experienced.

When at length I raised my eyes, the sun had swung itself clear into the dazzling canopy of heaven and was pouring its flood of shimmering gold across the littered floor of the workshop. With an effort I pulled myself together, thrust my hands into my pockets, and plunged off through the gap in the wall into the green heart of the woods beyond.

Where I was going I neither knew nor cared. My one desire was for action. It gave me a certain primitive satisfaction to feel twigs snapping under my tread. I longed to smash things, to give way to some form of physical violence, to find some outlet for the unbearable strain of my feelings.

for the unbearable strain of my feelings.

And as I went I thought of Valda, of all the bright dreams that had been tentatively shaping in my mind during the past two days. One by one, like wistful ghosts, I watched them fade and vanish. A feeling

of rage supplanted my despair.

It must have been quite late in the afternoon when I found myself walking down a steep hill into a village. I had had nothing to eat since early morning, and the sight of an inn provoked a sudden feeling of ravenous hunger. Going into a deserted parlour, I rang a bell, ordered a meal of bread and cheese and beer, and filled in the time waiting for its arrival by glancing through a pile of somewhat ancient newspapers.

I had turned over a sheet of one of the previous Sunday's picture papers, and was wondering if I dare venture to ring the bell again—with the idea of accelerating the service—when I found my attention suddenly and startlingly arrested. From a mass of printed words a single heading stood out with dramatic effect. As though the letters

were letters of fire, they blazed and danced before my staring eyes.

They ran as follows:-

"Summer Time Ends To-night.
Clocks Back One Hour at Midnight!"

An indescribable sensation swept over me. The blood beat like a hammer in my temples. I heard myself laughing—weakly,

hysterically.

I had forgotten to make allowance for the difference between summer time and ordinary time. Consequently, by the clock, it must have been somewhere about twenty minutes to twelve, instead of twenty minutes to eleven, that Uncle Nathan had met his death!

VERY little remains to be told.

The explosion—upon which so much depended—was eventually proved to have taken place at approximately twenty-two and a half minutes before midday, summer time—about twenty-seven minutes after the death of Silas Cadwell. The fortune thus passed first to the younger brother

and then to myself.

I would also like to add that, for once in a way, Uncle Nathan was right about the value of his discovery. Only a few days ago I had a conversation with Sir Morris Stetson, of the War Office. From him I learnt that most favourable reports have been made upon the substance Rodinite, and that in all probability the Government will shortly be prepared to negotiate with me for the purchase of the formula.

"And to think that all that money might have been lost, too!" my wife commented in awestruck tones, when I told her about it. "Why, it—it's too awful to contemplate. Just supposing someone had moved those things on the bench before you got there!"

I slid an arm about her shoulders, holding her against me as we sat snugly side by side

on the big Chesterfield.

"It was rather a close shave," I admitted.
Yes! By Jove, it was! And the most wonderful part of all is this—you and I—at last!" There followed a short ruminative pause before I added: "Tell me, sweetheart, are you happy? I mean, as happy as you thought you'd be?"

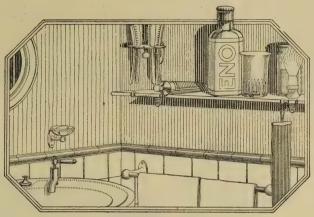
Valda sighed, a blissful sigh of absolute

ontent.

"There'd have to be a new language invented—to tell you how happy," she said.

My arm increased its pressure. Her head

My arm increased its pressure. Her head slid forward into its favourite cubby-hole under my chin. Over the soft glow of her hair I stared dreamily into the red heart of the fire. "Reason's whole pleasure, all the joys of sense, Lie in three words—Health, Peace and Competence"



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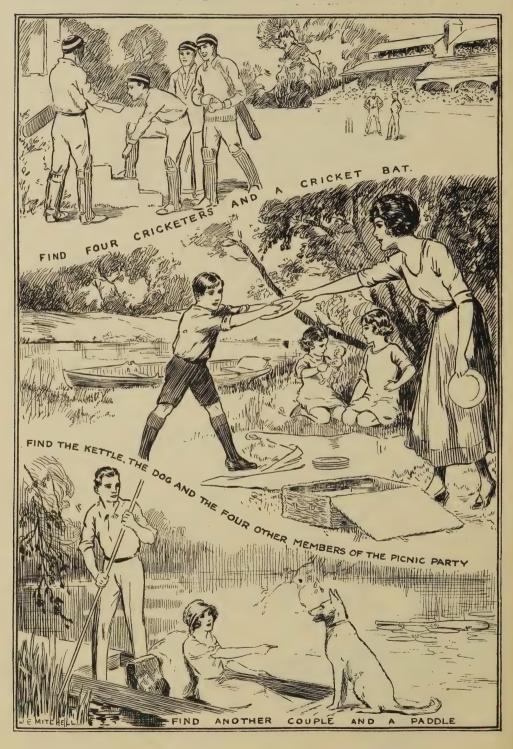
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